

Organizational Justice as an Enhancer of Organizational Commitment

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ABSTRACT

On various occasions, it has been suggested that the perception of Organizational Justice plays a significant role in determining organizational commitment. We reviewed more than hundred researches on Organizational justice to analyze how it enhances organizational commitment in work place. Our research indicates that most recent studies have suggested three major forms of Organizational Justice namely Procedural, Interactional and Distributive Justice and how these forms of organizational justice impact organizational commitment in various sectors. The objective of our article is to provide an overview of literature available in organizational justice and organizational commitment. More specifically this article: (a) provides a concise description of various enhancers and inhibitors of organizational commitment (b) provides a single platform for studies done on organizational justice and its impact on organizational commitment. (c) Suggests implications of our findings and future scope of research.

Keywords: *Organizational Commitment; Interactional Justice, Procedural Justice, Distributive Justice and Organizational Justice*

“Unless commitment is made, there are only promises and hopes...but no plans”

– Peter Drucker

Organizational commitment is one of the most researched topic in Industrial and organizational psychology due to its effects and potential impact on Organisation and its employees. Meyer et al (2002) found that affective commitment was negatively related to employee relevant outcomes (like work-family conflict and stress) and related positively to organization relevant outcomes (like job performance, Organisation citizenship Behavior and attendance). Various studies and

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research indicates that (1) organizational commitment leads to attitudes and behaviors that are beneficial for the employee and the Organisation. In two studies done by O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) on university employees and students, it was found that there are strong links between commitment based on internalization and identification and pro-social behaviors. Committed employees are more motivated to perform their jobs better in the Organisation, take up additional responsibilities and even demonstrate pro-social behavior at work and offer help to other colleagues beyond their job requirement. (2) Commitment is negatively related to turnover, withdrawal cognition and turn-over intentions. Meta-analysis done by Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch and Topolnysky (2002), suggested that all 3 forms of commitment (namely affective, normative and continuance commitment) were negatively related to turnover and withdrawal cognition. Organisation commitment has a positive impact on retention and negative impact on turnover intentions. Further, Kim, Leong and Lee (2005) in a study on "Effect of service orientation on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intention of leaving in a casual dining chain restaurant" found that organizational commitment was negatively associated with turnover intentions. (3) Organizational commitment is related to organizational effectiveness and Performance of the Organisation. In a study done on managers in public listed Malaysian companies, Abdul Rashid, Sambasivan and Johari (2003) found that organizational commitment and corporate culture type influenced the financial performance of these Malaysian companies. (4) Organizational commitment is positively related to engagement (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006). (5) Organizational commitment not only has positive effects on the organization but also has positive effect on employees. In a survey done by Herrbach (2006) on 365 engineers, he found that when the participants reported higher the affective organizational commitment they also reported to have experienced a more positive affective state. Employees who display more commitment to their Organisation seem to be happier and less stressed at work. Meyer and Maltin (2010) found that employees who have strong Affective Commitment may be better able to withstand stressors, given that these stressors do not impact commitment negatively or any of the mechanisms involved in its positive health effects (i.e., need satisfaction and autonomous regulation). Their review suggests that strong Affective Commitment is associated with more than simply the absence of illness. Further according to Luthans et al. (2008) Affective commitment is positively related to positive psychological capital.

Since the consequences of Organizational Commitment are so relevant and critical to the success of the Organisation, it therefore becomes imperative to understand the enhancers and inhibitors of Organizational commitment. While there are various enhancers to organizational commitment like Leadership, psychological capital, personal characteristics etc. organizational justice is of prime interest to the writers of this article for the following reasons:

1. Organisation Justice has a direct impact on satisfaction and commitment of its employees which in turn affects Organizational Performance. In a study done by Masterson (2001) on 187 instructors and their students, she found that when high distributive and procedural justice was perceived by the instructors they also reported higher commitment towards the

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Organisation. Further their students also reported higher levels of pro-social behaviors, instructor effort, and fairness, and displayed more positive reactions towards the instructor. Overall, the results imply that fair treatment of employees has important organizational consequences reflected in customers' attitudes and future intentions toward key service employees. She suggests a trickle-down effect of organizational justice, in which if the employees feel that they are treated fairly they will feel committed to the organization which in turn will have a positive impact on customers and will also influence customer reactions to employees

2. Since justice can be felt in procedures, transactions, interpersonal interactions and may not have a seemingly direct impact on day to day operations; many managers tend to misjudge the value or relevance of Justice on commitment of its employees. In a study done by Meyer and Smith (2000), it was found that employees evaluation of the Human Resource Management practices and their affective and normative commitment were largely mediated by the perceptions of organizational support and procedural Justice
3. In Authors' experience as managers, we have realized that even if the procedures are done right and yet if the communication is inaccurate, it leaves a sense of unfairness in its employees which stays latent for a long time and the impact is much bigger and is visible much later. Gopinath and Becker (2000) found that managerial communications that helped employees understand the events surrounding the divestiture increased perceptions of the procedural justice of the divestiture and layoffs, and had both indirect and direct effects on future commitment
4. Another critical aspect in our experience is the perception of fairness via other colleagues in or out of an employee's Organisation and also in terms of whether the employee feels that his colleagues are treated justly. Brockner et al (1994) found that survivors of job loss reacted adversely when the perception of procedural justice was low. Additionally Nadiri and Tanova (2010) found that that the fairness of personal outcomes that employees receive may have more impact on turnover intentions, job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) than the perceived fairness of a firm's procedures.
5. In this paper we discuss Organisation Commitment and how Organisation commitment has been understood by various researchers. We later discuss the key inhibitors and enhancers of organizational commitment. Further we focus on theoretical background of organizational justice and why it is an important enhancer of organizational commitment. Towards the end of the paper we summarize our findings, discuss future scope of research and strengths and limitations of our research.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Organizational Commitment – Theoretical Background

Organizational commitment may be defined as an attitude in the form of an attachment that exists between the individual and the organization, and is reflected in the relative strength of an employee's psychological identification and involvement with the organization (e.g., Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979). While there have been several approaches taken by various researchers

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Becker work in 1960 continues to be of prime importance in the Early Commitment Research Era. According to him, commitment is a function of side bets where side bets are comprised of personal investments like friendships, emotional and financial resources. The more side bets at stake, the greater the commitment to the activity. Later during the Middle Affective Dependence period, Porter and his colleagues defined commitment as “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization” (Mowday, Porter and Steers 1982; p.27).

As years passed, researchers like O’Reilly and Chatman explained organizational commitment as a multi- dimensional construct. In 1986, O’Reilly and Chatman’s proposed a conceptualization of commitment in workplace based on Kelman’s theory of attitude change. To them commitment in workplace is the attitude an employee has about the Organisation. This attitude can develop through various mechanisms like identification, internalization and instrumentality. Identification is the first mechanism that represents feeling of identification that occurs when an employee perceives that he or she is an integral member of that organization and develops a sense of belongingness and pride. Internalization is the second mechanism that represents a feeling of acceptance that an individual develops towards the organizational values and also a willingness to adhere to these values. Instrumentality is the third mechanism, where an employee is willing to continue in his workplace only to the point that he gets something in return, like benefits, satisfying pay, or other extrinsic advantages.

In 1990, Allen and Meyer later popularized the multi-dimensional approach through Three Component Model of Organizational commitment. According to them, Organizational Commitment has three forms namely Affective Commitment, Normative Commitment and Continuance Commitment. The affective commitment refers to employees’ emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in, the organization. In other words, it refers to the extent of emotional attachment of a person to the organization. This attachment could be due to one’s role in relation to the organizational goals and values, or to the organization for its own sake. The normative commitment refers to employees’ feelings of obligation to remain with the organization. This type of commitment will be influenced by an individual’s experiences both prior to cultural socialization and following organizational socialization entry into the organization. The continuance commitment refers to commitment based on the costs the employees associate with leaving the organization. In this type of commitment, the fewer viable alternatives employees have, the stronger will be their continuance commitment to their current employer. Later Cohen (2007) proposed a four component commitment model including Instrumental Commitment Propensity, Normative Commitment Propensity, Instrumental commitment and Affective Commitment.

Inhibitors of Organizational Commitment

1. *Job Dissatisfaction* – Griffeth, Hom & Gaertner (2000), in their meta-analysis found that Job Satisfaction predicted turnover. These findings were similar to research done by Maertz & Campion (1998) who suggest that Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job alternatives are important for understanding turnover. Further Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnytsky (2002) found that there was a strong correlation between job satisfaction and organizational commitment. These researches imply that dissatisfied employees are more likely to look for alternatives outside their organization and tend to demonstrate withdrawal cognition and turnover intentions
2. *Unfavorable Work environment* – In a study done by Griffeth, Hom & Gaertner (2000) they found that work environment, such as job content, stress, work group cohesion, autonomy, leadership predicted turnover. Their research indicated that non-conducive work environment can lead to employee attrition and reduced commitment. Similarly Shalley, Gilson and Blum (2000) found that when work environment complemented the creative requirements of the job, participants demonstrated higher job satisfaction and lower intention to leave. In another study researchers have suggested that managers may need to focus more on organizational subcultures in generating greater commitment among employees (Lok & Crawford, 2004).
3. *Unfair Performance Appraisals and Rewards* – Poon (2004) found that when employees perceived performance ratings to be manipulated because of raters' personal bias and intent to punish subordinates they expressed reduced job satisfaction that, in turn, led to greater intentions to quit their jobs. In another Research, Griffeth, Hom & Gaertner (2000) suggested that the role of contingent rewards helped to explain the performance turnover relationship and to illustrate the importance of merit-based reward systems for retaining high performers. Their findings imply that when collective reward programs replace individual incentives, their introduction may actually stimulate greater exits among high performers and negatively impact organizational commitment
4. *Poor Managerial Skills* – Too much or too little involvement in subordinate activities is likely to inhibit commitment from individuals. In a qualitative study of Swedish PhD. students who had dropped out of their doctoral program, Frischer & Larsson (2000) identified laissez-faire leadership by supervisors as the main reason for this attrition. In an interesting article, Conger (1990) has highlighted “The Dark Side” of Leadership management practices that may be displayed in his/her poor management of people networks, unconventional behavior that alienates subordinates creation of disruptive “in I group/out I group” rivalries, and an autocratic, controlling management style. These practices may undermine the goals of the organization by undermining the motivation, job satisfaction and well-being of subordinates (Einarsen, Aasland, & Skogstad, 2007)

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Enhancers of Organizational Commitment

1. *Perceived Organisation Support*: Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnytsky (2002) found that perceived organizational support has the strongest positive correlation with affective commitment. This finding is consistent with Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa's (1986) argument that organizations wanting affectively committed employees must demonstrate their own commitment by providing a supportive work environment. Among the things they can do to show support are to treat employees fairly and provide strong leadership.
2. *Empowerment* – Empirical evidence support that Empowerment enhances organizational commitment. In a study done by Bhatnagar (2005) psychological empowerment was found to be a predictor of Organizational commitment. She suggested that organizations must move from control-oriented to commitment oriented work practices in order to enhance organizational commitment. In similar vein Seibert, Wang, & Courtright (2011) found that Psychological empowerment was positively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment and negatively related to turnover intentions and strain. Further another research on nurses, done by Laschinger, Finegan, Shamian, & Casier (2000), suggested that empowered nurses reported higher levels of organizational trust, which in turn resulted in higher levels of affective commitment.
3. *Leadership Style* – Researchers have found a positive association between transformational leadership and organizational commitment. (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004; Dvir et al., 2002; Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999). Further Nguni, Slegers & Denessen (2006) found that transformational leadership dimensions have strong positive effects on teachers' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior
4. *Personal Characteristics* – Although there has been mixed evidence on the impact of demographic variables on organizational commitment, Mathieu & Zajac (1990) suggest that there is a positive relation between age and organizational commitment. Further in 1997, Meyer and Allen proposed that as the employee spends more time with the organization he is more likely to be emotionally attached to the organization which in turn makes it difficult for him to change jobs. Similarly Marital Status too seems enhance organizational commitment where married individuals are more likely to be committed to their organizations (John & Taylor, 1999)
5. *Positive Psychological Capital* -Youssef and Luthans (2007) in their study on 1032 participants found that Hope and Resilience is positively related to organizational commitment, suggesting that positive psychological resource capacity like Hope and Resilience is likely to enhance commitment. In another study, Avey, Luthans and Jensen (2009) have empirically proved that employee's Psychological Capital (Hope, optimism and Resilience) has a significant negative relationship with both indicators of voluntary turnover namely intentions to quit and job search behavior. These researchers further assert that if organizations focus on enhancing, components of efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience, organizations are likely to face lower turnover.

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6. *Organizational Justice* – Several Studies have emphasized how Organizational Justice enhances Organizational commitment. Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnytsky (2002) found that affective commitment correlates strongly with the various forms of organizational justice (i.e., distributive, procedural, and interactional) and with transformational leadership. We will discuss studies on Organisational justice as an enhancer of organizational commitment in details, in the later part of this paper.

Organizational Justice as an enhancer of Organizational commitment

1. ***Organizational Justice -Theoretical Background:*** Attempts to understand Organizational Justice dates back to early 1960s when Adam Smith (1965) used social exchange theory to assess fairness. He suggested that individuals assess fairness based on what an individual contributes (like knowledge, effort as an input) and what he actually gets (like pay, recognition as an output) out of this social exchange relationship. As researchers thrived to understand more about Organizational Justice so too have theoretical approaches used to study it. While most researchers focused on understanding fairness as distributive justice till 1970s, in 1975 Thibaut and Walker introduced the concept of process in fairness assessment. They suggested that there is a difference between perception of fairness of Outcome and the fairness of process used to reach that outcome. This culminated in to a term called Procedural Justice. Procedural justice referred to the perceived fairness of the policies and procedures used to reach decisions. It focused on the means, while distributive justice focused on the ends. While Thibaut and Walker's research primarily focused on disputant reactions in a legal context, researchers later extended the concept of Procedural Justice to other social context like education ((Tyler and Caine, 1981), politics (Tyler, Rasinski, and McGraw, 1985), interpersonal (Barrett-Howard and Tyler, 1986) and organisational contexts (Greenberg, 1987). In 1980, Leventhal, Karuza, and Fry suggested 6 criterias for the process to be perceived as fair namely (1) Process should be unbiased (2) Process should be applied consistently (3) Process should be accurate i.e correct information should be gathered (4) Process should be corrigible i.e. there should be some process to rectify incorrect decisions (5) Process should be representative i.e. views of various groups should be taken in to account (6) Process should be ethical.

Later Bies and Moag (1986) conceptualized justice as an examination of Interpersonal Treatment. The fairness should be respectful. Later Greenberg (1990) proposed that Interpersonal treatment had 2 forms namely informational justice (which dealt with on the kind of clarifications provided to the concerned individuals) and interpersonal justice (which dealt with the extent to which individuals are treated with respect, dignity and politeness). As the researchers continued their pursuit for understanding Organizational Justice, so did their approaches to define fairness perception. However Distributive, Procedural and Interpersonal Justice continue to be the 3 important components of Organizational justice. Organizational Justice researchers (Example Beugre & Baron, 2001; Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Farndale, Hope-Hailey & Kelliher, 2011; Kaul &

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Mishra, 2016, *Organizational Justice as a Predictor of Organizational Commitment in Automobile Dealerships in Delhi, National Capital Region*. Unpublished Manuscript, Nadiri & Tanova, 2010) continue to study correlates, outcomes and impact of these 3 forms of Organizational Justice in different contexts. Researchers like Colquitt (2001) suggested that Organizational Justice can be defined using a four factor confirmatory model. They suggested four forms of Organizational Justice namely procedural justice, informational justice, distributive justice and interpersonal justice and conducted studies to validate these measures in both university and field settings. Colquitt and his colleagues have done several studies and conducted meta-analysis to understand the correlates, outcomes and predictors of these 4 Justice dimensions (Colquitt, Scott, Rodell, Long, Zapata, Conlon, & Wesson, 2013; Colquitt, LePine, Piccolo, Zapata, & Rich, 2012)

2. ***Recent Research on Organizational Justice a key enhancer to organizational commitment:*** In this section we will discuss how different individuals respond differently to injustice and how organizational justice enhances commitment through various psychological processes. We further discuss how organizational justice causes individuals to demonstrate attitude and behaviors that demonstrate commitment towards their Organisation. Lastly we highlight the contagious nature of justice and how it can have mass impact on groups and organization commitment.
3. ***Role of Psychological Processes in Organisation Justice-Commitment Relationship -*** While Extant studies indicate how organizational justice influences organizational commitment and related outcome (For example Colquitt et al, 2013; Simons and Roberson, 2003; Masterson, 2001). We believe that organizational justice not only impacts organizational commitment directly but also influences organizational commitment indirectly through various psychological processes. By manipulating Justice in a laboratory setting, Johnson and Lord (2010) found that the interdependent self-identities were activated when individuals experienced justice and individual self-identities were activated when individuals experienced injustice. These researchers further asserted that the impact of these identity based effects were critical as they mediated the effect of fairness on counterproductive, cooperative behaviors and trust. Another study revealed that when Japanese workers perceived that they were treated fairly (both procedurally and interactionally) they experienced lesser psychological distress and were more engaged at work (Inoue, A et al, 2010). Colquitt, LePine, Piccolo, Zapata, & Rich (2012) found that procedural, interpersonal, and distributive justice were each significantly related to affect- and cognition based trust. According to these researchers Justice fosters a sense of mutual emotional investment while also signaling that authorities are reliable and dependable. They asserted that affect based trust had a significant relationship with normative commitment and provided evidence on how trust impacts the relationship between organizational justice and its effects. In an interesting research by Cole, Bernerth, Walter & Holt (2010) it was found that distributive and interpersonal justice were negatively related to emotional exhaustion and emotional exhaustion was negatively related to organizational

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commitment which further negatively influenced turnover intentions. In a similar vein Tepper (2001) has shown that victims of ‘day-to-day’ injustices are more likely to feel that they lack the resources needed to sustain hope and solve problems. Thus, to the extent that perceived injustices encourage victims to doubt their capacity to cope (due to a depletion of resources), such injustices may function as workplace stressors, triggering negative chain of events like stress reactions that include emotional exhaustion and organizational withdrawal. Various studies have pointed on how individuals experience organizational fairness and its impact. Hence it becomes imperative to understand the different aspects of psychological experience of Justice and how it enhances organizational commitment or how perceived injustice impedes commitment.

4. ***Fairness Perceptions impact Attitude and Behavior***-Organisation Justice Perceptions predict various employee attitudes and behaviors (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). Wang, Liao, Xia & Chang (2010) found that organizational Justice and Performance was mediated by organizational commitment and Leader Member exchange. Their research implies that when employees perceive fairness they are more likely to reciprocate by being more committed thereby leading to improved performance. In a similar vein, a Study done by Farndale, Hope-Hailey & Kelliher (2011) revealed that the link between employee experiences of high commitment performance management practices and their level of commitment is strongly mediated by related perceptions of organizational justice. Masterson, Lewis, Goldman & Taylor (2000) found that Leader Member Exchange fully mediates the relationships amongst interactional justice and both job satisfaction and Organisation Citizenship Behavior towards Supervisor. Their Research also indicates that Perceived Organizational Support fully mediates the relationships between procedural justice and job satisfaction and between procedural justice and turnover intentions. They also found that Perceived Organizational Support partially mediates the relationships between procedural justice and both Organisation Citizenship Behavior towards Organization and organizational commitment. In a recent study Kaul and Singh (in review Process) on organizational commitment researchers found that organizational justice predicts organizational commitment in Automobile dealerships in the National capital region in India. This study implied that allowing greater employee participation in the design of work procedures and ensuring respectful and honest interactions with employees is likely to have a “spill-over” effect on employee commitment which in turn will lead to behaviors that enhance customer retention and satisfaction (Bowen, Gilliland, & Folger, 1999). Various studies mentioned above demonstrate how organizational justice enhances commitment by positively impacting attitude and behavior of the employee
5. ***Justice Perceptions are contagious - Impact of Socialization*** - While Social Stressors may impact turnover intentions differently for different individuals (Harris, Harvey and Kacmar, 2009) it is also important to understand how unfairness as a social stressor may impact a group. According to DeGoey (2000) Justice Perceptions are contagious in which shared injustice reactions are generated by public discussions and consensus judgment. Li and

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Cropanzano (2009) in their literature review, using the Fairness Heuristic Theory, have suggested that social context serves as a heuristic influence on justice perceptions. In other words if a group of workers is exposed to the same stimuli and use the same heuristic, then they should tend to agree as to how their group has been treated. Using past research evidence these researches further asserted that third party perception of fairness also play a critical role where bystanders would like to see that justice standards are upheld or may sometimes try to rectify the injustice. These studies lead us to believe that if Justice Perceptions have such potent impact on the group and workplace, it will enhance group level commitment if the organizational justice climate is prevalent in the organization. In similar vein, Simons and Roberson (2003) suggest that if procedural and interpersonal fairness is prevalent in the group, organizations' are likely to benefit with reduced turnover and improved customer satisfaction as employees are more likely to be committed to their Organisation

CONCLUSION

Organizational Commitment is an important and crucial area of study for organizational psychologists and researchers. Based on the work of Meyer et al (2002), we have seen that commitment not only impacts performance and organizational effectiveness but has also played a significant role in improving employee health and reducing stress. Because of various compelling reasons (discussed in the introduction) and our specific interest in the area of organizational justice we begin our review by focusing on theoretical background of commitment and how commitment has evolved from Becker's (1960) one-dimensional approach through Allen and Meyer (1990) and Cohen's (2007) multidimensional Approach.

Beyond these important historical underpinnings of Organizational commitment, we then discussed, various inhibitors (like Job Dissatisfaction, Unfavorable Work Environment, Unfair Performance Appraisals and Rewards, Poor Managerial Skills) and enhancers (like Perceived Organizational Support, Empowerment, Leadership Style, Personal Characteristics, Positive Psychological Capital, Organizational Justice) of organizational commitment. Here we observed that while there have been a plethora of studies done on enhancers of organizational commitment, there is a greater need of research on inhibitors of organizational commitment. Fortunately there are some studies that imply how lack of certain enhancers can impact organizational commitment (Example, Griffeth, Hom & Gaertner, 2000). Further we highlighted how organizational justice has evolved as a construct and how it is an important enhancer of organizational commitment. We discussed how justice can be felt differently by various individuals and how it psychologically influences them and their commitment. Beyond the impact of these psychological processes we also discussed how justice influences commitment and can be seen in attitude and behavior of its recipients. Finally we discussed the contagious nature of justice which can have a manifold impact on the organization and how employees tend to use Fairness Heuristic Theory and how it can have an impact on the justice climate and their overall commitment

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Research Implication and Future Scope of Research

This study provides a single platform for Organizational Psychology Researchers, Students, Leaders and Experts working in the area of organizational commitment. This study provides a concise summary to Commitment and Justice Researchers and assesses the current state of research on this topic. This Research also provides a quick reference and helps in determining key questions about how justice enhances commitment and the need for future research in this area.

During this review of Literature we found that (1) Organizational justice Researchers must adopt a more nuanced view of various psychological processes while attempting to understand how justice impacts commitment. In our view it is also important to consider other effectively relevant responses to perceived injustice (2) Distributive Justice or Procedural Justice should not be the only lens used to explain the effect of Organizational Justice on Organizational Commitment. More Research is required in the Area of Interactional and Informational Justice and its impact on organizational commitment.(3) While there have been some recent studies on how justice perceptions are socially contagious, there is a huge scope to empirically understand how these perceptions can have a huge impact in an organization and may perhaps have a snowball effect (4) While we have restricted the discussion of Fairness Heuristic Theory since a detailed discussion was beyond the scope of the paper. We found that more research is needed in this context and the role that Fairness Heuristics plays in various contexts (like Automobile companies) or various geographies (like India)

Closing Remarks

One of the key strength of this paper to the best of our knowledge is that, that this is the first attempt to provide a single platform where key inhibitors and enhancers of organizational commitment are recorded in a single piece of research. This Paper will provide a single window for Researchers, Academicians and Industry experts who want to understand how Justice enhances commitment

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