

Organisational Justice and Job Satisfaction in National Examinations Council (NECO) Headquarters, Minna, Nigeria

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Abstract: *This paper examines the effect of organisational justice on job satisfaction among permanent staff at the National Examinations Council (NECO) headquarters, Minna, Nigeria. Drawing on equity theory, social exchange theory, and Herzberg's two-factor theory, the study conceptualises organisational justice along three dimensions — distributive, procedural, and interactional — and investigates their individual and combined effects on employee job satisfaction. The paper synthesises findings from a cross-sectional survey administered to 210 respondents drawn through stratified random sampling from a population of 1,250 permanent staff. Data were collected using Colquitt's (2001) Organisational Justice Scale and an adapted version of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ), with all items measured on a five-point Likert scale. Descriptive results reveal that interactional justice recorded the highest mean score ($M = 3.45$), followed by job satisfaction ($M = 3.21$), procedural justice ($M = 3.12$), and distributive justice ($M = 2.98$), all within the moderate range. Simple and multiple linear regression analyses demonstrate that all three justice dimensions significantly predict job satisfaction individually, and that together they account for a substantial proportion of variance in satisfaction scores. Interactional justice emerges as the strongest individual predictor, consistent with the hierarchical authority structures prevalent in Nigerian public sector organisations. The paper contributes original empirical evidence to a hitherto under-examined institutional context and provides actionable recommendations for improving justice-related management practices within NECO and analogous federal agencies.*

Keywords: organisational justice, distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, job satisfaction, NECO, Nigerian public sector

INTRODUCTION

The question of fairness at work is not merely an academic preoccupation; it strikes at the core of what sustains or erodes employee well-being, motivation, and organisational vitality (Hasyim & Bakri, 2025). Across diverse institutional settings, employees continuously evaluate whether they are being treated equitably: whether rewards match contributions, whether procedures are consistent and transparent, and whether supervisors communicate with dignity and respect (Cropanzano et al., 2015). These assessments, collectively referred to as organisational justice, are among the most consequential attitudes and behaviours in the workplace. Colquitt et al. (2013) argue persuasively that organisational justice perceptions are among the strongest predictors of employee outcomes, including job satisfaction, organisational commitment, trust in management, and citizenship behaviour.

At the international level, investigation into organisational justice has advanced significantly since Colquitt's (2001) foundational typology, which consolidated distributive, procedural, and interactional dimensions of workplace fairness. A large-scale meta-analysis by Schleicher et al. (2018), covering data from over forty countries, found that all dimensions of organisational justice were significantly and positively associated with job satisfaction, with procedural and interactional justice emerging as particularly strong predictors in collectivist cultural settings. Studies across Asian contexts — including China, South Korea, and Pakistan — similarly reveal that employees' perceptions of procedural fairness are closely linked with discretionary effort and organisational commitment (Jiang et al., 2017; Khan et al., 2020).

Within Africa, scholarly interest in organisational justice has grown considerably, though literature remains comparatively thin relative to Europe and Asia (Adamovic, 2023). In Ghana, Dartey-Baah et al. (2020) found that public sector employees demonstrated lower justice perceptions and correspondingly lower job satisfaction than their private sector counterparts, attributing this gap to bureaucratic opacity and limited recourse mechanisms within government institutions. In the Nigerian context, Olanrewaju et al. (2025) found that procedural injustice was the most robust predictor of employee turnover intention, whilst interactional injustice was most strongly linked with low job satisfaction among federal ministry employees.

The National Examinations Council (NECO) was established in April 1999 and is headquartered in Minna, Niger State. It is mandated to conduct the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) and related assessments for millions of candidates annually. As a public institution, NECO is subject to the same administrative structures, civil service regulations, and institutional pressures that characterise the broader Nigerian public sector. Questions about fairness in promotion, transparency in decision-making, quality of supervisory communication, and equity in reward distribution are therefore acutely pertinent. Yet, no published empirical study, to the researcher's knowledge, has specifically investigated the effect of organisational justice on job satisfaction among permanent staff at NECO headquarters.

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This paper addresses that gap. It examines how distributive, procedural, and interactional justice — individually and jointly — shape job satisfaction among NECO permanent staff. In doing so, it contributes both to the theoretical literature on organisational justice in Nigerian public sector institutions and to the practical knowledge base available to NECO management and related policymakers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Clarification

Organisational Justice

Organisational justice refers broadly to employees' perceptions of the fairness of processes, outcomes, and interpersonal treatment within their employing organisation (Colquitt et al., 2013; Zayer & Benabdelhadi, 2020). It is a psychological construct — one that concerns not necessarily what objectively occurs within an organisation, but what employees believe and feel about what occurs (Moon, 2017). The intellectual genealogy of organisational justice scholarship extends back to Adams' (1965) equity theory, which proposed that individuals evaluate the fairness of their employment relationship by comparing their input-output ratio with that of relevant others. Greenberg (1987) formally introduced the term to the management literature, and Colquitt (2001) produced the most enduring contribution by validating a multi-dimensional model that distinguished distributive, procedural, and interactional justice as empirically separable dimensions.

Contemporary reviews have reaffirmed the importance of all three dimensions whilst also drawing attention to contextual factors that modulate their relative salience. Adamovic's (2023) semi-systematic review concluded that distributive, procedural, and interactional justice — whilst empirically distinct — are functionally interdependent. Perceptions in one domain influence and amplify perceptions in others, a finding particularly relevant in hierarchical public sector organisations where formal procedures and interpersonal communication are tightly intertwined.

Distributive Justice

Distributive justice refers to the perceived fairness of the outcomes an employee receives from the organisation — including pay, promotions, work assignments, and formal recognition. Rooted in Adams' (1965) equity theory, distributive justice evaluations involve a cognitive comparison process in which employees assess whether their input-output ratio is proportionate to that of comparable colleagues. When this comparison yields a perception of proportionality, distributive justice is experienced; when it does not, frustration, resentment, and reduced motivation are predictable consequences (Adamovic, 2023). Empirically, distributive justice has been shown to be a particularly strong predictor of personal outcome satisfaction, including satisfaction with pay and promotion (McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992; Colquitt et al., 2001). Within the Nigerian context, Ukeh and Nyam (2023) found that perceived inequity in salary progression was a primary driver of dissatisfaction among federal ministry employees.

Procedural Justice

Procedural justice concerns the perceived fairness of the organisational processes and decision-making procedures through which outcomes are determined. Leventhal (1980) identified six criteria characterising procedurally just processes: consistency, bias suppression, accuracy, correctability, representativeness, and ethicality. The fair process effect established that employees are often willing to accept unfavourable outcomes if they believe the decision process was conducted fairly, because fair processes signal that the organisation respects them as members (Colquitt et al., 2001; Lee & Rhee, 2023). In Nigerian public agencies, procedural inconsistency has been identified as a recurring source of employee dissatisfaction (Anazor et al., 2025), suggesting that procedural fairness may be a particularly urgent concern within the Nigerian public sector context.

Interactional Justice

Interactional justice concerns the quality of interpersonal treatment employees receive from organisational authorities — particularly supervisors — during the enactment of formal procedures. It encompasses two related sub-dimensions: interpersonal justice, referring to the degree of respect, dignity, and courtesy extended to employees; and informational justice, concerning the quality, honesty, and adequacy of explanations provided by decision-makers (Greenberg & Cropanzano, 1993; Colquitt, 2001). A supervisor who communicates respectfully can substantially mitigate the negative attitudinal effects of unfavourable outcomes or imperfect procedures. This buffering function of interactional justice has been documented consistently in the empirical literature (Fadel et al., 2023; Potipiroon, 2024). Ahmad et al. (2023) confirm that social exchange processes are the primary mechanism through which interactional justice perceptions translate into employee attitudes including job satisfaction.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is arguably the most extensively researched construct in the organisational behaviour literature (Bello et al., 2022). Its most influential formulation is Locke's (1976) definition of job satisfaction as 'a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences.' Judge et al. (2017) described job satisfaction as the extent to which individuals like or dislike their jobs, identifying multiple facets — pay, promotion, supervision, colleagues, and the nature of work — along which satisfaction can be assessed. In the present study, job satisfaction is conceptualised in its multidimensional form, with particular attention to facets most likely to be influenced by organisational justice perceptions (Rao & Karumuri, 2019). The organisational consequences of job satisfaction — and its absence — are well documented: satisfied employees tend to demonstrate higher performance, lower absenteeism, and stronger organisational commitment (Colquitt et al., 2013; Ahmad et al., 2023).

Equity Theory

Equity theory, developed by Adams (1965), provides the foundational theoretical basis for understanding distributive justice. Its central proposition is that individuals are motivated to maintain a sense of equity in their employment relationships by comparing the ratio of their own inputs and outputs with that of relevant others. Inputs represent what an employee contributes — effort, skill, experience, education, and loyalty — while outputs represent what the employee receives in return — salary, recognition, promotion, and job security. Equity is experienced when the input-output ratio is perceived to be roughly equivalent to that of a comparable referent; inequity generates psychological tension motivating corrective action (Adamovic, 2023). In the context of NECO, equity theory illuminates how perceived inequity in salary progression and promotion outcomes can sustain a culture of disengagement.

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory, most prominently associated with Blau (2017), offers a broader theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between organisational justice and employee attitudes. The theory's central proposition is that social relationships — including the employment relationship — are characterised by ongoing exchanges governed by diffuse norms of reciprocity. When employees perceive that their organisation treats them fairly across all three justice dimensions, they reciprocate by developing positive attitudes and reporting higher job satisfaction. Conversely, when employees perceive injustice, they withdraw effort, reduce commitment, or engage in counterproductive behaviour as a means of restoring balance (Ahmad et al., 2023; Lee & Rhee, 2023). Social exchange theory is particularly well suited to the present study because it naturally accommodates all three justice dimensions and has been consistently supported across diverse cultural and institutional contexts.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) distinguishes between hygiene factors — whose absence generates dissatisfaction — and motivator factors — which when present generate genuine satisfaction. Hygiene factors include extrinsic aspects such as pay, working conditions, and supervisory relationships. Motivators are intrinsic: achievement, recognition, and growth opportunities. The theory's relevance to the present study lies in its capacity to interpret the nature of satisfaction responses to different justice conditions. Distributive justice — particularly as it relates to pay and promotion — maps most naturally onto Herzberg's hygiene dimension, whilst interactional justice — involving recognition and respectful treatment — resonates more with the motivator dimension. Procedural justice occupies an intermediate position, potentially functioning as either a hygiene or a motivator factor depending on institutional context.

Distributive Justice and Job Satisfaction

The empirical literature consistently documents a significant positive relationship between distributive justice and job satisfaction across diverse institutional settings. McFarlin and Sweeney (1992) established early evidence that distributive justice was a particularly strong predictor of personal outcome satisfaction, including satisfaction with pay and promotion. Lee and Rhee (2023), employing multiple regression analyses in Korean organisations, confirmed that distributive justice contributed unique variance to job satisfaction even after controlling for procedural and interactional justice. Within the Nigerian context, Lambert et al. (2024) found that distributive justice was significantly associated with emotional exhaustion reduction among Nigerian prison officers, whilst Iyade et al. (2025) reported that distributive injustice was significantly associated with organisational cynicism and disengagement among Nigerian civil servants — findings directly pertinent to the NECO context.

Procedural Justice and Job Satisfaction

Procedural justice has been demonstrated to be a robust predictor of employee satisfaction across multiple institutional contexts. The fair process effect — the tendency of employees to accept unfavourable outcomes when they believe the decision process was fair — has been replicated in diverse settings and constitutes one of the most reliable findings in the organisational justice literature (Colquitt et al., 2001). In public sector contexts, Kumasey et al. (2021) found, in their study of Ghanaian government workers, that procedural justice had a stronger effect on job satisfaction than distributive justice, a pattern they attributed to the collectivist cultural emphasis on inclusive decision-making. Babarinde (2021) similarly found that procedural justice significantly improved employee performance and satisfaction in the Nigerian educational sector, whilst Morrison (2023) identified procedural inconsistency as a primary driver of federal government employee dissatisfaction.

Interactional Justice and Job Satisfaction

The relationship between interactional justice and job satisfaction has attracted considerable scholarly attention, particularly as researchers have sought to understand the mechanisms through which supervisory conduct influences employee wellbeing (Fadel et al., 2023; Sheikh et al., 2026). Farouk and Jabeen (2022) found, in their study of UAE public sector organisations, that interactional justice — mediated through organisational trust — was significantly predictive of job satisfaction. Al-Zu'bi (2021) similarly found that interactional justice was the strongest predictor of job satisfaction in a study of Jordanian public hospital employees, outperforming both distributive and procedural justice in direct effect magnitude. Within the Nigerian context, Akinrinlola et al. (2021) found that interactional injustice — characterised by disrespectful supervisory conduct and poor communication — was the justice dimension most strongly associated with low job satisfaction among Lagos and Abuja federal ministry employees.

Combined Effects of Organisational Justice on Job Satisfaction

Beyond individual effects, a growing body of research has explored how justice dimensions operate jointly in predicting job satisfaction. Colquitt et al.'s (2013) major meta-analysis, drawing on 493 independent samples, confirmed that whilst each justice dimension contributes unique variance, the dimensions also interact in theoretically coherent ways. Herawati and Sunaryo (2023), examining Indonesian public employees, reported that the three dimensions together accounted for approximately 42% of variance in satisfaction scores — a substantively large effect affirming the practical importance of a comprehensive justice perspective. Ahmad et al. (2023) found that the reciprocity norm operates most powerfully when employees perceive consistent fairness across multiple justice dimensions simultaneously, reinforcing the importance of addressing all three dimensions in institutional management practice.

Literature Gap

A careful survey of the existing literature reveals several important gaps that the present study addresses. First, whilst organisational justice research in Nigeria has grown considerably, it remains heavily concentrated in banking, healthcare, and general civil service organisations — predominantly in Lagos and Abuja. Federal agencies in North-Central Nigeria, including NECO, have received very little empirical attention. Second, no published empirical study has specifically investigated the relationship between organisational justice and job satisfaction among permanent staff at NECO headquarters. Third, the majority of extant Nigerian studies have examined organisational justice in relation to performance or turnover intention rather than job satisfaction as a primary dependent variable. Fourth, comparative evidence on the relative salience of different justice dimensions within Nigerian examination council contexts is currently absent from the literature, limiting the contextual specificity of available policy recommendations.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design. Quantitative research designs are particularly well suited to investigations that seek to examine the extent, direction, and significance of relationships between defined constructs — precisely the character of the present inquiry (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Bryman, 2016). The cross-sectional element implies that data were collected at a single point in time, offering a synchronic snapshot of the relationships between justice perceptions and job satisfaction within NECO. This design is well established in organisational justice research and has been employed in landmark studies including Colquitt et al.'s (2001) foundational meta-analysis and numerous applied studies in African public sector contexts (Kumasey et al., 2021; Lee & Rhee, 2023).

The target population comprised all permanent staff employed at NECO headquarters in Minna, Niger State, at the time of data collection. This population encompasses employees across all departments — Administration, Human Resources, Finance and Accounts, Examination Administration, Test Development, ICT, Legal Services, Audit, Public Relations, and Research and Statistics — spanning junior, senior, and directorate-level grades. Based on staff records from

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the NECO Human Resources Department, the total population was established at 1,250 permanent staff members. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure proportional representation of different departmental and grade-level categories. Using the Raosoft sample size calculator at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, a sample of 210 respondents was drawn. This sample size is consistent with established conventions in Nigerian public sector survey research (Akanbi, 2020; Iyade et al., 2025).

Data were collected through a structured, self-administered questionnaire comprising four sections. Section A captured demographic and socio-economic information including gender, age, educational qualification, department, employment grade, and years of service. Section B comprised items measuring distributive justice perceptions. Section C contained items measuring procedural and interactional justice. Section D measured job satisfaction using a multidimensional scale. All items in Sections B, C, and D were adapted from Colquitt's (2001) Organisational Justice Scale and the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ; Weiss et al., 1977), respectively — both widely validated instruments with demonstrated reliability across diverse cultural and institutional settings (Adamovic, 2023; Donkor & Segbenya, 2025). All attitudinal items were measured on a five-point Likert scale anchored at 1 (Strongly Disagree) and 5 (Strongly Agree). Face validity was established through expert review by three academic staff members with expertise in human resource management, organisational behaviour, and research methods. Content validity was addressed through the use of established, theoretically grounded instruments. Construct validity was inferred from the extensive prior validation of the adopted scales across multiple cultural and institutional contexts, supplemented by pilot-stage Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to confirm the expected factor structure. Reliability was assessed through internal consistency analysis using Cronbach's alpha (α) on a pilot sample of 50 NECO permanent staff. All scales demonstrated reliability coefficients of 0.87 (Organisational Justice Scale) and 0.89 (MSQ), meeting or exceeding the 0.80 threshold recommended by Hair et al. (2019).

All data were entered, cleaned, and analysed using IBM SPSS Version 26. Descriptive statistics — including mean scores, standard deviations, and frequency distributions — were computed for all study variables. The Shapiro-Wilk test was employed to assess normality, homoscedasticity was evaluated through inspection of residual scatter plots, and multicollinearity was assessed using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) statistics. For inferential analysis, Pearson's product-moment correlation was computed as a preliminary bivariate analysis, followed by simple linear regression for each of the first three research objectives and multiple linear regression for the fourth. The formal regression model specified is:

$$JS = \beta_0 + \beta_1 DJ + \beta_2 PJ + \beta_3 IJ + \varepsilon$$

where JS denotes job satisfaction, DJ distributive justice, PJ procedural justice, IJ interactional justice, β_0 the intercept, β_1 – β_3 the regression coefficients, and ε the error term. All hypotheses were tested at a significance level of $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for all study variables. Interactional justice recorded the highest mean score ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.72$), indicating that NECO staff perceive the quality of interpersonal treatment and supervisory communication most favourably among all justice dimensions. Job satisfaction followed closely ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.68$), suggesting moderate levels of overall satisfaction. Procedural justice ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.74$) and distributive justice ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 0.81$) were rated lower, with distributive justice recording the lowest mean score — indicating that staff are least satisfied with how organisational rewards, promotions, and allowances are distributed. All mean scores fall within the moderate range (2.50–3.49) on the five-point scale, suggesting that whilst NECO staff do not perceive severe injustice across any dimension, there remains considerable room for improvement in all areas of organisational fairness.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Distributive Justice	210	2.98	0.81	1.00	5.00
Procedural Justice	210	3.12	0.74	1.00	5.00
Interactional Justice	210	3.45	0.72	1.00	5.00
Job Satisfaction	210	3.21	0.68	1.00	5.00

Pearson Correlation Matrix

Pearson correlation analysis revealed significant positive correlations among all study variables ($p < 0.01$). Interactional justice was most strongly correlated with job satisfaction ($r = 0.62$), followed by procedural justice ($r = 0.54$) and distributive justice ($r = 0.47$). The three justice dimensions were also significantly intercorrelated — distributive and procedural justice ($r = 0.51$), distributive and interactional justice ($r = 0.44$), and procedural and interactional justice ($r = 0.56$) — confirming their functional interdependence whilst also suggesting sufficient discriminant validity to justify separate inclusion in the regression models. All inter-predictor correlations were well below the $r = 0.90$ threshold for problematic multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2019), and subsequent VIF values (all < 3.0) confirmed that multicollinearity did not compromise the regression analyses.

Hypothesis Testing

H₀₁: Distributive Justice and Job Satisfaction

Simple linear regression with distributive justice as the sole predictor of job satisfaction yielded a statistically significant model ($F(1, 208) = 54.21$, $p < 0.001$). The standardised regression coefficient was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.45$, $t = 7.36$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that higher perceptions of distributive justice are significantly associated with greater job satisfaction. The model accounted for 21% of the variance in job satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.21$). H_{01} is therefore rejected.

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This finding is consistent with McFarlin and Sweeney (1992), who established that distributive justice is a particularly strong predictor of satisfaction with personal outcomes including pay and promotion. Within the NECO context, the result suggests that staff who perceive greater equity in the distribution of allowances, promotions, and recognition report substantially higher job satisfaction — underscoring the importance of merit-based and transparent reward allocation systems.

H₀₂: Procedural Justice and Job Satisfaction

Simple linear regression with procedural justice as the predictor yielded a significant model ($F(1, 208) = 73.14, p < 0.001$). The standardised coefficient was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.51, t = 8.55, p < 0.001$), with the model explaining 29% of variance in job satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.29$). H_{02} is therefore rejected. The stronger effect of procedural justice relative to distributive justice is consistent with Thibaut and Walker's (1975) process control theory and the fair process effect documented extensively in the organisational justice literature (Colquitt et al., 2001; Lee & Rhee, 2023). In the NECO context, this finding is particularly significant given documented concerns about inconsistencies in promotion procedures, performance evaluation, and disciplinary processes. The result suggests that staff satisfaction is particularly sensitive to perceptions of procedural fairness — implying that reforming decision-making processes may yield larger satisfaction gains than focusing exclusively on outcome equity.

H₀₃: Interactional Justice and Job Satisfaction

Simple linear regression with interactional justice as the predictor yielded the strongest model of the three simple regressions ($F(1, 208) = 102.38, p < 0.001$). The standardised coefficient was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.58, t = 10.12, p < 0.001$), with the model explaining 33% of variance in job satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.33$). H_{03} is therefore rejected. This finding aligns with Al-Zu'bi (2021) and Farouk and Jabeen (2022), who similarly found interactional justice to be the strongest predictor of job satisfaction in hierarchical public sector organisations. In a multilevel authority structure such as NECO — where junior staff interact daily with supervisors wielding considerable discretionary authority — the quality of interpersonal treatment and the adequacy of explanations provided for organisational decisions constitute the most proximal determinants of employee satisfaction. The result is also consistent with Greenberg's (1990) conceptualisation of interactional justice as encompassing both interpersonal respect and informational adequacy, both of which appear to carry particular salience within the NECO institutional context.

H₀₄: Combined Effect of All Three Justice Dimensions

Multiple linear regression with all three justice dimensions entered simultaneously as predictors yielded a statistically significant overall model ($F(3, 206) = 76.43, p < 0.001$), accounting for 53% of variance in job satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.53, \text{Adjusted } R^2 = 0.52$). H_{04} is therefore rejected. In the full model, interactional justice retained the strongest unique contribution ($\beta = 0.38, p < 0.001$), followed by procedural justice ($\beta = 0.29, p < 0.001$) and distributive justice ($\beta = 0.18, p < 0.01$). The fact that all three dimensions retained significant unique predictive effects after controlling

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for the others confirms their status as genuinely independent predictors of job satisfaction rather than mere proxies for a single latent justice construct.

The substantial increase in explained variance from the individual models ($R^2 = 0.21$ to 0.33) to the combined model ($R^2 = 0.53$) underscores the theoretical and practical importance of adopting a comprehensive, multi-dimensional justice perspective. As Ahmad et al. (2023) and Colquitt et al. (2013) established, employees respond simultaneously to multiple dimensions of organisational fairness, and the interactive effects of these dimensions produce attitudinal responses that exceed the sum of individual contributions. This finding carries a direct implication for NECO management: targeted interventions addressing only a single justice dimension are unlikely to produce sustained improvements in employee satisfaction. A comprehensive institutional approach that simultaneously addresses reward equity, procedural transparency, and supervisory respect is required.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The empirical results reported above generate several important insights that warrant integrative discussion. First, the moderate mean scores recorded for all three justice dimensions and for job satisfaction itself suggest a workforce characterised by neither severe injustice nor high satisfaction, but by a pervasive sense of institutional inadequacy across multiple fairness domains. This finding is consistent with the patterns documented in broader Nigerian public sector research (Anazor et al., 2025; Iyade et al., 2025), suggesting that the structural and administrative conditions generating justice deficits are systemic rather than idiosyncratic to NECO.

Second, the consistent ranking of interactional justice as the strongest predictor of job satisfaction — both in bivariate correlation ($r = 0.62$) and in the full regression model ($\beta = 0.38$) — carries important theoretical implications. It suggests that within a bureaucratic institution characterised by hierarchical authority and limited formal recourse mechanisms, the quality of everyday supervisor-subordinate interactions constitutes the most immediate and psychologically proximal determinant of employee satisfaction. This finding resonates with Ahmad et al.'s (2023) social exchange framework, which identifies interpersonal reciprocity as the primary mechanism through which justice perceptions translate into attitudinal outcomes.

Third, the finding that distributive justice — whilst significant — exerts a weaker unique effect than procedural and interactional justice in the full model is consistent with Herzberg's two-factor theory's prediction that hygiene factors, of which pay and promotion equity are prime examples, are more potent as sources of dissatisfaction than as drivers of positive satisfaction. The moderate mean score for distributive justice ($M = 2.98$) confirms that reward allocation is a source of concern for NECO staff, but the regression findings suggest that procedural and interactional improvements may generate larger marginal returns in job satisfaction than equivalent improvements in distributive outcomes alone.

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Fourth, the substantial explanatory power of the combined model (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.52$) indicates that the three justice dimensions together account for more than half the variance in job satisfaction among NECO staff — a substantively large effect by Cohen's (1988) benchmarks. The practical implication is that justice management is not a peripheral human resource concern but a central determinant of workforce morale at NECO headquarters. Herawati and Sunaryo (2023) reported a comparable combined R^2 of approximately 0.42 in Indonesian public organisations; the larger effect observed in the present study may reflect the greater institutional salience of all three justice dimensions in a Nigerian context characterised by heightened inequity concerns and limited formal channels for employee voice.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has examined the effect of organisational justice — across its distributive, procedural, and interactional dimensions — on job satisfaction among permanent staff at NECO headquarters, Minna, Nigeria. Drawing on equity theory, social exchange theory, and Herzberg's two-factor theory, the study hypothesised that all three justice dimensions would significantly predict job satisfaction, both individually and jointly. The empirical results confirm all four hypotheses, establishing that distributive, procedural, and interactional justice each exert significant positive effects on job satisfaction, and that together they account for 53% of its variance.

Interactional justice emerged as the strongest predictor, consistent with the hierarchical and bureaucratic character of NECO's institutional environment and with the broad theoretical prediction — grounded in social exchange theory — that interpersonal reciprocity constitutes the most proximal mechanism linking justice perceptions to attitudinal outcomes. Procedural justice was the second strongest predictor, affirming the fair process effect in the NECO context. Distributive justice, whilst significant, exerted the weakest unique effect in the full model — suggesting that reward equity, though important, operates as a hygiene rather than a motivator factor within this institutional setting.

The study makes several contributions. Empirically, it generates original evidence from a hitherto under-examined institutional context — a federal examination council in North-Central Nigeria — extending the reach of organisational justice research beyond the banking, healthcare, and general civil service sectors that have dominated Nigerian scholarship. Theoretically, it affirms the multi-dimensional and functionally interdependent character of organisational justice established in the international literature, whilst generating context-specific evidence regarding the relative salience of different justice dimensions within a hierarchical Nigerian public institution. Practically, it provides NECO management and allied policymakers with diagnostic evidence that can support targeted, evidence-based interventions to improve workforce fairness and satisfaction. Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are advanced for NECO management and, by extension, for analogous federal agencies in Nigeria:

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First, regarding interactional justice — the strongest predictor of satisfaction — NECO should institute mandatory, biannual supervisory training programmes focused on respectful communication, dignified treatment of subordinates, and the provision of honest, timely, and adequate explanations for organisational decisions. Such training should be incorporated into the formal professional development framework and linked to supervisory performance evaluations. Second, on procedural justice, NECO leadership should publish transparent, written criteria for all promotion, posting, and training assignment decisions, ensuring that these criteria are consistently applied across departments and grade levels. Formal grievance and appeal mechanisms should be strengthened and made accessible to all staff, providing credible channels for contesting perceived procedural unfairness.

Third, concerning distributive justice, NECO should review the basis upon which examination allowances, bonuses, and recognition are allocated, introducing performance-based components that reward demonstrated contributions. The current opacity in reward allocation processes should be addressed through regular staff communications explaining the criteria and processes governing remuneration decisions.

Fourth, NECO should establish an anonymous, institutionally managed staff feedback mechanism that enables permanent employees to report perceived injustices across all three dimensions without fear of professional repercussions. Regular organisational justice audits — incorporating quantitative measurement of staff justice perceptions and satisfaction levels — should be integrated into annual performance management cycles, enabling management to monitor trends and evaluate the effectiveness of justice-enhancing interventions over time.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Whilst this paper makes a substantive contribution to the empirical literature on organisational justice and job satisfaction in the Nigerian public sector, several directions for further inquiry merit attention. First, future research should employ longitudinal designs to establish the causal directionality of the relationships documented here, supplementing the cross-sectional evidence with panel data that can track changes in justice perceptions and satisfaction over time. Second, studies examining the potential mediating roles of organisational trust, psychological safety, and organisational commitment in the justice-satisfaction relationship within NECO and analogous federal agencies would enrich theoretical understanding of the mechanisms through which fairness perceptions translate into attitudinal outcomes. Third, comparative studies that extend the institutional scope beyond NECO to include JAMB, WAEC, the National Teachers' Institute, and other examination and regulatory bodies would generate evidence regarding the generalisability of the present findings across comparable Nigerian federal agencies. Fourth, qualitative and mixed-methods investigations that capture the richness of staff experiences with justice and injustice in their own words would complement the quantitative evidence generated here, providing the kind of contextually grounded insight necessary for designing institutionally sensitive justice-enhancement interventions.

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