

## Distributive Justice and Employee Performance: An Assessment of their Relatedness in Deposit Money Banks in South-South Nigeria

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### Abstract

In deposit money banks, distributive justice suggests that employees' satisfaction is a function of outcomes. As such, the employees ought to access fair and/or equitable share of the resources, rewards and even punishments (where necessary) within their banks. However, this is seemingly not so owing to the distributive injustices in the Nigerian deposit money banks. To address the distributive injustices, this study assesses the relationship between distributive justice, and task and contextual performance in deposit money banks in south-south Nigeria. Cross sectional survey research design was adopted, while proportionate stratified random sampling and simple random sampling techniques were employed to select the bank employees that completed the study questionnaire. The generated data were subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis to test the study hypotheses. The results show that distributive justice is significantly and positively related to task and contextual performance. The study concludes and recommends the use of distributive justice as a strategy for improving task performance and contextual performance. Further studies should be conducted to validate this result and to add to the burgeoning literature.

**Keywords:** Organisational Justice, Distributive Justice, Employee Performance, Task Performance, Contextual Performance, Deposit Money Banks

### Introduction

The term "organisational justice" was coined in the early 1960. Organisational justice was first mentioned in 1961 by Homans and used for the first time in 1964 to describe fairness in personnel management [1, 2]. Organisational justice was at the beginning limited only to the outcomes which were called distributive justice [3, 4]. These outcomes connote what the employees perceive to get based on their input and resource allocation [5-7]. Such outcomes are termed fair or unfair based on the perception of the employees [4]. Distributive justice suggests that satisfaction is a function of outcome [8].

Distributive justice is one of the dimensions of organisational justice (i.e., distributive, procedural, interpersonal, informational, temporal and spatial justice) [8, 9]. It is justice where one cannot separate ideas of equality and inequality, especially because it concerns the proportionality in the distribution of not only goods but also honours or awards, respecting each person for what he is

or what he has as value [10]. These rewards, which come in the form of timely promotion, regular salary payment, adequate training, and open and fair appraisal system, can improve the overall quality of work life, turnover intention and performance [11]. The resources or outcomes can be tangible or intangible (pay or praise) [3, 12].

When distributive injustice is perceived by employees in the human resource practices of the organisation their commitment and performance decreases [13]. Distributive injustice refers to a practice where unfair means are used to allocate the results across workers/employees and they do not receive their expected outcomes, especially when they compare their outcomes to that of other employees with same job description. There are three allocation principles that can create distributive justice if suitably administered: "equality (to each the same), equity (to each in accordance with contributions), and need (to each in accordance with the most urgency)" The perceived presence of inequity can create

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workplace sabotage and employee theft [14].

Distributive justice ensures fair and even allocation of resources for assigned jobs, rewards or benefits and even punishments to employees. Further, distributive justice assures equal and equitable allocation of facilities across the departments and branches of organisations. However, there seems to be a steady increase in injustice or unfairness in the apportionment of benefits, punishment and facilities in the Nigerian deposit money banks. This is evident in the transfer, promotion, reward and retention by connection that has imbued the subsector.

Also, there is lop-sidedness in the banks' branch networks; with majority of their branches located in the urban centres. Equally noticeable, is the unfairness with which work related issues are addressed in branches located in rural areas in relation to branches located in the urban areas. Bank branches are sometimes not well distributed in the rural areas, the rural branches do not get a fair share of work facilities, and the branches in the rural areas are often understaffed.

Several reasons have been adjudged for the aforementioned injustices. These include corruption, job insecurity, lack of integrity, sentiment, "IM – Ima Mmadu" and nepotism on the part of the leaders. Consequently, there seems to be an unprecedented increase in age cheat, diabolism, sexual promiscuity, "eye service", lack of commitment, indiscipline, stealing of organisational products and property, and poor quality work on the part of employees seeking for rewards. In addition, the organisation may experience increasing running cost and dwindling performance. If these injustices are not identified, contained or stopped, it could further degenerate to the hiring of incompetent and dishonest employees, diabolical fights among employees with the attendant consequence of litigations, resignations and deaths. The organisations stand to be embroiled in declining customer loyalty, losses and decreasing performance. Above all, the rate of poor quality products and services, and unemployment among academically qualified people may surge.

To address distributive injustice in the Nigerian deposit money banks, there is need to investigate the influence of distributive justice on employee performance. The study contributes to the literature by bringing to the fore the relatedness of distributive justice to task and contextual performance. The study will motivate the management of deposit money banks to employ fair measures in allocating resources, benefits and punishments to employees and in sitting branches and allocating facilities to branches in both urban and rural areas. The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: the conceptualisation of the key terms in the study is presented; the hypotheses development; the underpinning theories; and the results and discussion. The paper ends with the conclusion and recommendations.

## Literature Review

### Distributive Justice

Distributive justice implies the view of employees regarding the overall justice between the comprehensive scope of investments made and the attached compensation [15]. Other researchers brought to the fore what should be distributed and the basis for

the distribution. Abasi et al [1,16]. view distributive justice as the allocation of resources on a fair and equal basis. Yavuz argue that distributive justice explains the delivery of all kinds of acquisitions such as duties, goods, services, opportunities, punishments, rewards, roles, status, wages and promotion among members of an organisation, based on their similarities and differences. When resources are not allocated based on merit and performance, the employees are more likely to face distributive injustice. Distributive justice does not only depict fair distribution of rewards to employees, it also relates to giving employees fair and just punishment [17]. Distributive justice is concerned with the reality that not all workers are treated alike; the allocation of outcomes is differentiated in the workplace. Sometimes things are distributed justly, as when the most qualified person gets promoted. At other times, they are not, as when advancement is given based on political relationship members of the upper management team [18]. For the purpose of this study, distributive justice is viewed as employees' perception of the allocation of tangible and intangible resources, rewards and punishment as equal or similar.

### Employee Performance

Employee performance is the result that the employee gets within a certain amount of time by doing a given [19]. It is also viewed as the effective effort made by an employee to successfully achieve a planned goal by effectively conducting and concluding a task [20]. Performance can build or destroy the reputation as well as the profitability of an organisation [21]. Employee performance comprises task performance and contextual performance [22]. Task performance connotes fulfilling responsibilities specified in the job description, while contextual performance imply doing activities which are although important, but does not fall within the assigned job roles [23]. Further, task performance is defined as the efforts put in by an employee to accomplish the assigned tasks and responsibilities to him/her as stated in the job description. Contextual performance is the quality of social relationships with juniors, seniors and customers; an employee's effort that is not formally required as part of his/her task as stated in the job description. However, it contributes to the social and mental condition of the organisation. The reason for performance evaluation is to make decisions concerning employees' salary increment, promotion or discipline.

### Hypotheses Development

Organisations as social systems need assets such as human resources to achieve its objectives. As such, organisations cannot record improved performance without employees. This is because organisational performance is the aggregation of the performance of employees. Further, one of the factors that influence employees' task and contextual performance is their perceptions of how fair resources and decision outcomes are distributed within the organisation [24]. Corroborating this view, Yaghobi asserts that the resultant effect of implementing justice in the workplace is improved employee job performance [25]. Thus, as insiders in organisations, employees who perceive resource distribution to be unjust perform poorly in their job roles [26]. The results of Zehir and Yildirim's study show that distributive justice perceptions of employees have a negative effect on their individual performance [27].

Contrariwise, Mehrabi et al. affirm that distributive justice is pos-

itively and significantly related to employees' performance [28]. The conclusion of Suliman and Kathairi's study reveal that distributive justice positively influences job performance [29]. The result of Wang et al.'s (2010) research shows that distributive justice significantly and positively impact task performance [30]. The findings of the study to establish the effect of distributive justice on task performance by Nasurdin and Khuan is significant and positive [31]. Further, Moazzezi et al. empirically prove that distributive justice is positively related to job performance and its dimensions (i.e., context and tasks or obligation) [32]. Maymand and Abdollahi found that distributive justice impact on job performance of employees positively, while Kalay observe that distributive justice makes a positive and significant impact on task performance [33,22]. Krishnan et al.'s study show that the association between distributive justice and employees' job performance is positive [24].

It is evident that distributive justice significantly affects employees' perceptions and performance. However, existing studies on distributive justice has not fully explained outcomes such as task and contextual performance [22,31]. Again, the organisational environments in the Western world where most of the previous studies were conducted differ significantly from what obtains in Africa and Nigeria in particular. Moreover, employees' perception of distributive justice varies according their culture [33]. That is, the perception of distributive justice by an employee in South-South Nigeria may not be same with that of an American. This inconsistency in result suggests that further studies concerning this relationship are needed. Thus, it is pertinent to situate the investigation of this relationship in South-South Nigeria. We hypothesize that:

**H01:** There is no significant relationship between distributive justice and task performance in deposit money banks in South-South Nigeria.

**H02:** There is no significant relationship between distributive justice and contextual performance in deposit money banks in South-South Nigeria.

## Underpinning Theories Equity Theory

Equity Theory (ET) was propounded by Adam [3]. ET states that people care about the fairness and not absolute level of the outcomes they receive. Equity or fairness is determined by comparing ratio inputs (contributions) and outputs (rewards) to referent others within an organisation. The individuals feel satisfied when equity is perceived in the workplace. Otherwise, they will adjust their behaviour or mental perceptions to change unpleasant inequitable states to pleasant equitable ones [34]. The three variables identified in the equity theory are input, outcome and reference variables [35]. Input variables are those things an employee lends to an organisation. These include energy, skills and trust for the organisation management, self-sacrifice, loyalty and time. Outcome variables are salary, recognition of achievement and praise. The reference variable points to referent persons or groups in the form of colleagues, group of colleagues, in an organisational setting. Employees are motivated when they perceive that their outcome-input ratio is at par with a referent colleague, particularly one whose inputs could be matched with theirs [36,37]. Actions to redress or reduce perceived inequity could be in the form of

resignation from employment, in an extreme case, reduction in the quality of job done, increase in absenteeism and lowered responsibility. One of the consequences of perceived inequity in the workplace, particularly when employees are under-rewarded, is anger [3].

The angry and underpaid employee may attempt to come out of this unhappy state of inequity by different approaches. One, they alter their inputs (contribution) or outcomes (returns) through cognitive distortion of either inputs (contribution) or outcomes (returns). Two, they terminate the exchange relationship. Three, they change the reference of comparison and four; they change the inputs or outcomes of the others [2]. In the first case employees are likely to respond with reduced efforts in the workplace. In the second situation, they are likely to leave the organisation or start making effort to quit, that is, exit or intention to exit response. In the third case, they justify the prevailing inequity and hope for the situation to improve - loyalty response. In the fourth situation, they raise voice for increase in their rewards - voice response. It is likely that in case none of the four-response strategy works they may lose trust in the organisation and likely to become cynical - respond with cynicism [2]. In extreme cases, where inequity is perceived to persist, an employee could resign his appointment. In any case, the consequences are not good for an organisation. However, in a harsh economic situation as the one faced in Nigeria, an employee who feels or perceives inequity (example, an employee with a "casual" employment status), may find it hard to consider the option of resignation. Such an employee may remain in the employment, however, with a lot less input, and hence, reduced performance [38].

## Social Exchange Theory

Blau theorised Social Exchange Theory (SET) [39]. The basic assumption of SET is that human relationship develops over a period into mutual commitments and these commitments are influenced by various exchange principles. The most influential principle is the principle of reciprocity. Researchers have categorised reciprocity into three different types, namely; (i) reciprocity related to interdependent exchange, (ii) reciprocity as a general belief (i.e., people get according to what they deserve and ultimately, they will get a fair share), and (iii) reciprocity as a cultural norm and individual orientation [2, 39]. Resources like money, status, services and information can be exchanged in a reciprocal relationship. Reciprocity in social exchange is central in organisational justice principle, such that if an individual feels a lack of balance in the exchange, he will perceive this exchange situation as unfair. Further, the theory asserts that if an individual perceive balance and fairness in the reciprocal exchange of contribution and return, he will try to strengthen the exchange relation by a constructive and pro-social response (voice or loyalty) but if he perceives the exchange relation as unfair, the tendency of a pro-social and constructive response will diminish and the tendency of anti-social, destructive response (exit, neglect or cynicism) will increase [2]. Zeb et al. argue that if one party treats the other party well, a reciprocal relationship is formed among them and the other party in return obliges with favourable treatment [40]. Fair activities improve employees' and organisational performance, while unfair activities lead to decline in performance.

## Research Method

The study adopted cross sectional survey design. The population of the study comprised all the deposit money bank branches and employees in the States in South-South Nigeria (i.e., Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers). Deposit money banks in South-South Nigeria have 483 branches and 11898 employees. Krejcie and Morgan sample size formula for finite population and Bowley proportional allocation formula were employed to respectively compute the sample size for the study and for the respective bank branches [41,42]. Proportionate stratified random sampling and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the employees that completed the questionnaire. The measures for distributive justice were adapted from Altaf et al., Rupp et al. and Verburg et al., while the measures of task and conceptual performance were adapted from Kalay and Krishnan et al. [43,44,45,22,24]. The measurement scales were assessed on a Likert scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire was validated by three lecturers in the Department of Management, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt. The reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed by a Cronbach's alpha value of .993. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was employed to test the hypotheses.

## Results and Discussion

The result of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis for the relationship between distributive justice and task performance is presented in Table 1. The result show that the relationship is positive and highly significant ( $r = .959$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Hence, H01 is rejected. We therefore conclude that distributive justice is significantly related to task performance in deposit money banks in South-South Nigeria.

**Table 1: Correlation of Distributive Justice and Task Performance**

		DJE	TPE
DJE	Pearson Correlation	1	.959**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	328	328
TPE	Pearson Correlation	.959**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	328	328

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

**Note:** DJE = Distributive Justice, TPE = Task Performance

**Source:** Field Work, 2021

Table 2 depict the result of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between distributive justice and contextual performance. The result reveal that the relationship between distributive justice and contextual performance is positive and highly significant ( $r = .950$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Thus, we reject H02 and conclude that distributive justice is significantly related to contextual performance in deposit money banks in South-South Nigeria.

**Table 2: Correlation of Distributive Justice and Contextual Performance**

		DJE	TPE
DJE	Pearson Correlation	1	.950**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	328	328
TPE	Pearson Correlation	.950**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	328	328

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

**Note:** DJE = Distributive Justice, CPE = Contextual Performance

**Source:** Field Work, 2021

The results reveal that distributive justice is positively and significantly related to task performance. This result is somewhat consistent with the conclusions of Kalay, and Maymand and Abdollahi [22]. Kalay found that distributive justice impacts task performance significantly. Maymand and Abdollahi establish that distributive justice positively influences job performance. Contrariwise, Zehir and Yildirim empirically affirm that distributive justice negatively affects individual performance [27]. The consistency in results between the current study and that of Kalay, and Maymand and Abdollahi could be linked to the use of similar measures and the sharing of same focus; the banking subsector. Again, the difference in result between the current study and that of Zehir and Yildirim could be attributed to differences in focus; the current study focused on the banking subsector, while Zehir and Yildirim investigated insurance companies.

It is a common observation that employees leave their organisations on perception of unfairness and prejudice. This phenomenon has contributed in making organisational justice an important human resource practice [46]. The perceptions of unfairness by employees in an organisation can lead to negative feelings and actions, and poor employee performance. Conversely, the perception of fairness without bias in the distribution of resources by management can create positive feelings and reactions among employees [35]. Usmani and Jamal aver that employees exhibit positive behaviours and improved performance when they perceive fairness and justness in the distribution of resources within the organization [12]. Thus, enhanced distributive justice will result to improved employee performance.

Further, the result of the data analysis shows that the relationship between distributive justice and contextual performance is positive and highly significant. Similar to this finding is the result obtained by Moazzezi et al. and Nasurdin and Khuan. Moazzezi et al. found that the relationship between distributive justice and contextual performance is positive. Nasurdin and Khuan establish that distributive justice is positively and significantly related to task performance. The reason for the related results could be the use of similar measures. The most important aspect of an organisation is its human resources. The perception of fairness affects the attitude and behaviour of employees. It can by extension lead to pos-



itive or negative employee performance. This positive or negative employee performance can occur both in the case of performing job roles and roles not formally required of the employees. Employees who receive a fair share of the job resources for carrying out their job roles and other roles not formally required of them (but which genuinely contribute to the performance of their jobs and the organisation) will record improved job performance. Otherwise, their performance may start dwindling [47,12].

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The result of this study has shown that distributive justice is related to task performance and contextual performance in deposit money banks in South-South Nigeria. Like every other study, this result should be interpreted in the light of the following limitations. First, only few of such studies have been conducted in the Nigerian context. As such there was a challenge of scant literature. Second, the study is limited by the issue of methodological bias that is associated with the withdrawn information in questionnaire surveys. Thus, further studies can employ qualitative method or a triangulation method. Third, the study has a narrow geographic scope. That is, the study is limited to deposit money banks in South-South Nigeria which has six out of the nation's thirty six states and Abuja. As such, the respondents' views may not reflect that of bank employees from other geographical zones in Nigeria. The geographic scope of further studies can be widened by conducting a comparative study involving Northern and Southern Nigeria, bank branches located in urban and rural areas, other geopolitical zones in Nigeria or other parts of the world.

In addition, a sampling technique that ensures that responses are collected from selected States in each of the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria can equally be adopted in further studies. This is to validate the current findings and to add to the burgeoning literature. Fourth, responses were only collected from bank employees; excluding the views of customers and other members of the public like the private security personnel, cleaners who work inside the banks. Consequently, aside bank employees, researchers carrying out similar studies in the future can include bank customers as respondents. Fifth, the study only considered organisational justice as a predictor of employee performance, excluding other factors such as organisational culture, organisational engagement that could also influence employee performance. Researchers conducting further studies can as well determine the influence of predictors such as organisational culture and organisational engagement on employee performance. The use distributive justice as a strategy for improving task performance and contextual performance is recommended.

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