ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICES AND EMPLOYEE WORK ENGAGEMENT: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANIZATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
Employee work engagement, an emerging issue of 21st century is critical for the success of organizations. The present study investigated organizational justices and employee work engagement using a comparative approach of public and private sector educational institutions in southeastern Nigeria. One hundred and eighteen (118) employees of both public and private tertiary educational institutions in Enugu metropolis, southeastern Nigeria was purposively sampled. Three hypotheses were tested. Pearson’s product-moment correlation and Independent t-test were the statistical tools used in analyzing the data collected. The findings of the study revealed significant positive relationship between organizational justices (distributive, procedural, and interactional) and employee work engagement. Employees of private tertiary educational institutions have a higher level of employee work engagement than employees of public tertiary educational institutions. However, employees of both public and private tertiary educational institutions did not differ in their perceptions of organizational justices. The findings of this study are discussed with reference to the reviewed literature, Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model and Social Exchange Theory (SET). The present study highlights the need for employees to be provided with resources needed to perform their work roles since it has beneficial effects on employee work engagement.

Keywords: Organizational justices, employee work engagement, job demands-resources (JD-R) model, social exchange theory, Enugu metropolis, Southeastern Nigeria.

Introduction
The goal of every modern organization of is to attain its zenith and remain competitive and relevant in a continuously changing globalized market. Work engagement and progressive advancement of organizations has in recent times attracted much attention of researchers and practitioners especially from the developed countries of Europe and America due to its various positive work outcomes and improved organizational performance (Salanova, Agut, and Peiro 2005). It has in recent times increasingly gained status as a legitimate construct among academic scholars (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008) for its impact on organizational performance and competitive advantage. Baumruk described the noteworthy role of employee work engagement and described it as “the missing link”, that is, one of the significant factors of organizational success (Baumruk, 2004). In fact, employee work engagement is mentioned as a new and emerging issue of 21st century and regarded as a prominent factor for the success of organization. Proponents of this rising concept tout its ability to predict positive employee outcomes, organizational success, and financial performance (Saks, 2006). Employee work engagement has become an overnight sensation in the
business consulting world for its statistical relationship with variables such as job involvement, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior and employee commitment (Little & Little, 2006) and in effect productivity and profitability (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). Also, employee work engagement has been linked to customer satisfaction, retention, and loyalty (Bates, 2004), good relationship with co-workers (Vance, 2006).

As is observed, highly engaged employees have a passion for their work and feel deeply connected to their workplace. Catlette and Hadden (2001) define employee work engagement as the positive, affective psychological work-related state of mind that leads employees to actively express and invest themselves emotionally, cognitively, and physically in their role performance. However, the most often cited definition of work engagement is that offered by Schaufeli and colleagues, describing it as “a positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006, p. 702). Rather than a momentary and specific state, engagement refers to a more persistent and pervasive affective cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behaviour. Vigour is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one’s work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties. Dedication is characterized by a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. Absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and deeply engrossed in one’s work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2001, 2004).

Engaged employees work harder, are more likely to go above the requirements and expectations of their work (Lockwood, 2007). Researchers commonly describe engaged employees as individuals who are highly energized and resilient in performing their job; put their heart into their jobs with persistence and willingness to invest effort; exhibit strong work involvement along with experiencing feelings of significance, enthusiasm, passion, inspiration, pride, excitement, and challenge from their work; and fully concentrate and immerse themselves in their work without noticing that time passes (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). In effect, organizational managers would want to foster staff engagement because it tends to lead to improved work performance, reduces staff turnover and improves the well-being of employees (Wright & Cropanzano, 2000).

Empirical evidences on the organizational outcomes of employee work engagement have shown very encouraging results. For instance, Harter et al (2002) conducted a survey of approximately 8,000 business units in 36 companies and reported that compared with other companies, those whose employees had high-average levels of engagement had higher levels of customer satisfaction, were more productive, had higher profits, and had lower levels of turnover and accidents. Companies like Caterpillar took initiative to increase employee engagement that resulted in an 80% drop in grievances and a 34% increase in highly satisfied customers (Lockwood, 2007). Also, several studies have confirmed that employee work engagement predicts employees’ performance, satisfaction, organizational success, and organization’s financial performance (Bates, 2004; Baumruk, 2004; Harter et al., 2002; Richman, 2006). Thus, employee work engagement is visualized as the prominent factor for the success of organization.

However, emotionally engaged employees are in short supply (Attridge, 2009; Thackray, 2005; Zemellive, 2015). Globally, relatively low levels of employee engagement continue to be reported in organizations (Albrecht et al., 2015). There is a deepening disengagement among employees worldwide today (Bates, 2004; Richman, 2006). Aon (2013) reported that four out of every ten employees they surveyed were not engaged, and two out of ten were actively disengaged. It has even been argued that the majority of workers today, roughly half of all Americans in the workforce, are not fully engaged or are disengaged (Bates, 2004; Johnson, 2004). According to Flade (2003), only 19% of the total British workforce are engaged while 61% and 20% are not engaged and actively disengaged respectively. Robbins and Judge (2009) argue that engagement becomes a real concern for most organizations because surveys indicate that few employees – between 17% to 29% – are highly engaged by their work. Equally disturbing is the fact that employee disengagement is costly and exists to varying degrees in every country, industry, and organization (Zemellive, 2015; Wellsin, Bernthal, & Phelps, 2005). For instance, disengagement is costing US businesses $300 billion a year in lost productivity (Bates, 2004; Johnson, 2004). In UK, estimates of the cost of disengaged workers on the British economy range between £37.2 billion and £38.9 billion (Flade, 2003). Despite the fact that disengaged workforce exists in different countries and across organizations, global economy still thrive with a paltry fraction of engaged workers. However, the ugly trend should not be allowed to fester because increasing the number of more engaged workforce could add to more valued organizational outcomes.

In addition, the concept remains new with relatively little academic research conducted on it especially in Sub-Saharan Africa (Saks, 2006). As observed by Saks (2006), the concept of employee
engagement is currently in its early stage and there is the need for more rigorous studies to unearth its theoretical underpinnings and practical application, along with its antecedents and consequences. Robinson, Perrys, and Hayday (2004) also concluded that there has been surprisingly little academic and empirical studies on one of most popular concept i.e. employee engagement. There is therefore need for much more investigation to find its exact role on organizational performance. According to Saks (2006), the concept of employee engagement is currently in its early stage hence the need for more rigorous studies to unearth its theoretical underpinnings and practical application, along with its antecedents and consequences.

As researchers are only beginning to define and explore the phenomenon of workplace engagement, specific factors which might predict it are still unclear and limited (e.g. Bjarnadottir, 2011; Jenaro, Flores, Ogaz, & Cruz, 2010). It is therefore appropriate to understand the factors that might predict work engagement as the understanding could lead to organizations where engaged employees would flourish, and organizations stand to benefit. However, most studies on organizational justice come from western nations focusing only on its relationship with employment equity (Esterhuizen, 2008); disciplinary procedures (Van der Bank, Engelbrecht, & Stumpher, 2010) and organizational attractiveness (Pilvinyte, 2013). Similarly, studies on work engagement have focused on its relationship with leadership, commitment, culture, workaholic, performance, burnout and career development (Werner, 2005; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Marelli, 2011; Bowen et al, 1999; Shimanzu & Schaufelli, 2009). There is therefore limited research that could be found linking organizational justice with work engagement within the context of the Nigerian organization. Thus, the current study is geared towards contributing to engagement literature by examining social contextual variables specifically organizational justice predicting engagement in Nigeria.

The issue of justice is very crucial in people’s life especially in workplace when decision has to be made regarding limited resources. Issues like monetary allocation, hiring employees in organization, policy making and implementations that affect people in organization require special attention with regard to justice (Colquitt, Greenberg, & Zapata-Phelan, 2005). Every employee wants justice in working environment in terms of fair procedures used to determine rewards, distribution of rewards, interaction with supervisors to make them more satisfied and committed with their work and organization. When employees are treated fairly overall in the organization, they feel need of reciprocal response to the organization in positive behavior. As such, organizational justice is becoming one of the most important motivation theories and is now one of the leading research subjects in the field of organizational behavior, working psychology and human resources (Cojuharencio and Patient, 2013). As employees pay attention to justice within their organization, perceptions of justice can affect organizational outcomes such as commitment, job satisfaction, withdrawal behavior, citizenship behavior, entrepreneurialism and the organizational trust of employees (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Ambrose et al., 2002; Zhang et al., 2014). As such, organizational justice is one of the most important internal leading factors affecting the performance, emotion and behavior of human resources (Alder and Tompkins, 1997; Wang et al., 2010; Crawshaw et al., 2013; Suliman and Kathairi, 2013; Strom et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2014; Scott et al., 2015).

Expectedly, the liberalization of the world economy and the resultant growth in competition among firms has ushered in significant changes in managerial policies and procedures, especially those related to human resource (HR) functions (Budhwar & Sparrow, 1998; Sparrow & Budhwar, 1997). One clear outcome has been the shift in emphasis from day-to-day operations to strategic initiatives (Budhwar, 2001; Yadapadithaya, 2000). As a result, policies such as performance-linked compensation, employer branding activities, talent acquisition and employee engagement initiatives are now commonplace (Bhatnagar & Biswas, 2010). Also, multinationals in Nigeria has created awareness in both the employers and employees of the need for international best practices and standards in relation to HR issues. With that, there is the need for more participative and fair environment in today’s workplace thereby making justice issues critical in the workplace.

Organizational justice is the perception of individuals and groups regarding fair treatment that they receive from the organization and their resultant reactions in behaviours to such perception. It is defined as the employees’ perception of fairness and justice in the organizations (Adams, 1965). Also, it refers to the degree to which the conduct of an organization toward its employees is perceived to be fair. Specifically, organizational justice is concerned with the ways in which employees determine if they have been treated fairly in their jobs and the ways in which those determinations influence other work related variables (Moorman, 1991). It is a versatile concept which covers everything from system of payment to treatment of the boss and plays a vital role in effective functioning of organization. According to Kaneshiro (2008), organizational justice can be defined as the evaluation process of administrative decisions by employees in the frame of variables such as task distribution of employees, compliance with shifts, empowerment, wage levels, distribution of rewards, experiencing fair economic and social working environments and employees’
perceptions of internal decision making processes and how these decisions are shared with employees. In general, organizational justice is regarded as the evaluation process of administrative decisions by employees in the frame of variables such as task distribution among employees, compliance with shifts, empowerment, wage levels, distribution of awards, experiencing fair economic and social working environments and employees’ perceptions of internal decision making processes and how these decisions are shared with employees (Kaneshiro, 2008).

Literature suggests that organizational justice consists of three components, namely, distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (Niehoff and Moorman, 1993; Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Wang et al., 2010). However, there is disagreement among some researchers regarding the position of interactional justice as a third component of organizational justice. Some scholars (e.g., Greenberg, 1990; Roch and Shanock, 2006) approach organizational justice as comprising only distributive and procedural justice, while others regard interactional justice as a sub-dimension of distributive justice (e.g., Suliman & Kathairi, 2013). According to Aydin and Kepenekci (2008), interactional justice is a compliment of procedural justice. Yet other scholars see four factors, dividing interactional justice into the sub-dimensions of interpersonal and informational justice (e.g., Greenberg, 1993; Colquitt, 2001; Walumbwa et al., 2009; Crawshaw et al., 2013; Scott et al., 2015). More recently, some scholars have examined organizational justice as a whole (e.g., Ambrose and Schminke, 2009; Cojuharencu and Patient, 2013). However, Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001), from their meta-analytical studies established that the distributive, procedural and interactional justice factors are three separate entities. As a result, interactional justice is proposed to be different from other form of justice i.e. procedural justice and distributive justice (e.g. Bies and Moag, 1986). Thus, the three widely accepted dimensions of organizational justice are, namely distributive, procedural and interactional justice.

Distributive justice is concerned with perception of fairness in distribution of reward and focuses on people’s beliefs that they have received fair amount of valued work-related outcomes such as pay, recognition, etc. Procedural justice relates to the fairness of the process of allocation decisions (Adams, 1965). It is the issue of fairness of procedures used to determine the outcomes received by employees. A number of procedural justice criteria have been outlined, such as opportunities for control of the processes and the outcomes, ability to voice one’s view points (Folger and Crognazano, 1998) consistency, lack of bias, availability of appeal mechanisms, accuracy, and following ethical and moral norms (Leventhal et al., 1980). Interactional justice defined as interpersonal justice means people’s perceptions of the fairness of the manner in which they are treated by others (typically, authority figures) (Greenberg & Beron, 2008). It focuses on the way employees are treated by decision makers in the organization and whether they show respect, sensitivity to individual differences, and explain decisions thoroughly. Treatment by decision maker is very important and as such they should respect others, be truthful, courteous, and ready to give reasonable explanation of decision taken and communicate in two way process. Thus, organizational justice consists of three dimensions – distributive, procedural, and interactional.

Traditionally, employees and employers are in mutual agreement, a kind of psychological contract. In exchange for employees’ commitment and engagement, employers would provide forms of value for employees, such as needed resources in terms of equitable and fair distribution of resources, fair procedures and interactions in relating with the employees, secure jobs and fair compensation. Reciprocity may affect the intensity of engagement. When an entity or individual to whom someone has made a commitment fails to come through with the expected exchange, the engagement may erode (Vance, 2006).

There is therefore the need to provide organizations in Nigeria with empirical evidence needed to develop and implement policies and practices that foster engagement in their workforce. Recent dramatic changes in the global economic downturn may have significant implications for engagement and reciprocity between employers and employees in Nigeria. To remain in business, organizations in Nigeria have to compete thereby necessitating the need to cut costs, refining business processes, delay ring management structures and at the same time engage employees physically, emotionally and cognitively. As scarce and costly resources have prompted organizations to restructure and cut cost in terms of resources offered to employees to perform their tasks, there is still the need to engage employees in order to remain in business. Thus, Nigerian organizations, being susceptible to the global economy and economic downturn have no option but to remain in business, hence the need to investigate the interaction between organizational justice and dedication to one’s job (employee work engagement). In this regard, this study intends to engage the three dimensions of organizational justice, namely, distributive, procedural and interactional, to explore their impact on employee work engagement in both public and private sector organization in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study
1. To determine the relationship between organizational justices and employee work engagement,
2. To compare the practice of organizational justices of public and private sector organizations, and
3. To compare employee work engagement of public and private sector organization.

**Literature Review**

**Theoretical Perspective**

- **Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008)** and **Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964)** are some of the theories relevant to this study.

1. **JD-R Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008)**

   The JD-R model assumes that every job is associated with certain demands as well as resources which trigger two different processes, a health impairment process and a motivational process (Bakker et al., 2014). Job demands refer to “those physical, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical or mental effort, and are therefore associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs (e.g. exhaustion)” (Demerouti et al., 2001, p. 501). Job resources on the other hand are the physical, psychological and organizational aspects of a job that help employees’ complete tasks successfully and achieve work goals; as those resources provide basic human needs and foster employee growth, learning, and development (Houkes, Janssen, Jonge, & Nijhuis, 2001). Whereas high job demands (high workload, emotional demands) may cause exhaustion, and lead to energy loss and impaired health among workers, the availability of job resources (organizational support such as co-worker support, supervisors’ support, organizational justices) function as a motivational process and lead to commitment and work engagement (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007, Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). According to the JD-R theory, job resources may buffer the impact of job demands on the employee (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). Thus, when organization provides employees with support such as enhanced organizational justices, they may tend to reciprocate by exhibiting high level of work engagement.

2. **Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964)**

   Similarly, Social Exchange Theory (SET) assumes that employees tend to act in ways that reflects their organizations or managers treatment (Agyemang, 2013). Social Exchange Theory sees organization as an arena in which long term and reciprocal social interactions take place between employees and the organization (Wayne et al., 1997). Scholars who use social exchange theory explain employee performance through employees’ relationships with both the organization and with the manager (Settoon et al., 1996; Wayne et al., 1997). Employees are motivated to compensate beneficial treatment from the employer by acting in ways valued by the organization (Agyemang, 2013; Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch & Rhoades, 2001). An assumption underlying the social exchange theory is the idea of reciprocity where both parties adopt a contingent approach; one party gives benefit based on previous contribution by the other party therefore adhering to the norm of reciprocity and reciprocation of benefit (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007). Using SET as the basis of his theoretical rationale, Saks (2006) argues that employees will choose to engage themselves to varying degrees and in response to the resources they receive from their organization. Engaged employees are more likely to have a high-quality relationship with their employer leading them to also have more positive attitudes, intentions, and behaviours.

   Combining these two theories, employees who are engaged actively in their organization may have a feeling of obligation to respond and repay the organization in some form (Cohen, 2000). One way for employees to repay their organization is to increase commitment to the organization (Croppanzo & Mitchell, 2005). Hence an employee with a high perception of organizational justices is likely to exhibit high work engagement. Thus, favorable reciprocal exchanges are expected to lead to employee work engagement.

**Distributive Justice and Work Engagement**

As Greenberg (1990, p. 399) observed, “[justice] is a basic requirement for the effective functioning of organizations and the personal satisfaction of the individuals they employ.” Distributive justice has roots in equity theory (Adams, 1965) wherein social exchange underlies relationships between employees and employers. While employees contribute their time and effort for the organization, employers compensate them through appropriate rewards and recognition. In this context, employees’ opinion about equity or inequity is based on their social comparison with a referent individual or group. The perceived input-output ratio of what employees receive for their contribution vis-à-vis referent individuals or groups decides equity or inequity (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998). Distributive justice would be achieved if not only rewards but also punishments are meted out impartially, as the focus is on fairness perceptions. Thus, as a result of input-output ratio comparisons, individuals exert more or less effort, altering their organizational participation.

Distributive justice has been found to predict workers’ satisfaction with compensation and benefits, and job attitudes including job satisfaction (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson,
Porter, & Ng, 2001), and turnover intentions (Konovsky & Cropanzano, 1991). In this connection, research suggests that justice is significantly associated with social exchange (Greenberg & Scott, 1996). SET stresses that the interrelation between employees and their organizations leads to mutual obligations, and fulfillment of these obligations can lead to perceptions of organizational support and failure to meet them can lead to perceptions of organizational misidentification (Blau, 1964). The main premise of SET is the norm of reciprocity wherein employees who perceive the distribution of rewards and resources to be fair and equitable return the favour by being cognitively, physically, and emotionally engaged in their work and workplace. In contrast, when the evaluation of distributive justice suggests it is unfair, it will affect the individual’s emotions (inducing anger, unhappiness, rage or guilt), cognition (for example, distorting inputs and outcomes cognitively) and ultimately behavior (for example, decreased performance or withdrawal) (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001) thereby affecting work engagement.

Procedural Justice and Work Engagement

Procedural justice refers to employees’ perceptions regarding the fairness of the formal procedures used to distribute rewards and benefits at work (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Accordingly, fairness of managerial policies and practices, especially human resource (HR) practices form the informational source of employees’ perceptions of procedural justice (Kuvaas, 2008), which shapes their cognizance of the various organizational, group, or individual outcomes (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Brockner, 2002). Employees who feel that their organizational decision-making and other related processes are impartial and nondiscriminatory will be motivated to comply with organizational requests and requirements (Bies, 2005).

Colquitt (2001) conceptualized the perception of procedural justice into two parts: formal procedures and fair outcomes. The justice of formal procedures concerns employees’ perceptions of the fairness of procedures used in the distribution of outcomes. Fair outcome is concerned with the level of employees’ perceptions of the pre-defined procedures used in the distribution of results. Also, according to Thibaut and Walker (1975), procedural justice has two sub-dimensions. The first aspect concerns the structural methods used in the process of making distributive decisions and practices. This aspect, which is also known as legal transactions, involves giving employees the right to speak and utilize their own ideas and approaches during decision making processes. The second aspect concerns whether decision-makers fairly apply the policy and practices during the decision making process. As noted earlier regarding the relationships involving reciprocal norms in organizations, employees’ opinions concerning the fairness of decision making as well as the processes by which they are made induces them to believe that the organization cares for them and is concerned about their welfare (Moorman, Blakely, & Niehoff, 1998). Thus, procedural justice predicts various employee attitudinal and behavioral outcomes including, task performance, rule compliance, cooperation, and deference to authority (Colquitt, 2001; Colquitt, Greenberg, & Scott, 2005). Studies (e.g. Moorman & Byrne, 2005) have also suggested a link between procedural justice and various employee level outcomes including organizational citizenship behaviour, organizational commitment, and organizational identification, because employees perceive organizational activities favorably towards them when they observe fairness in processes and practices (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001).

As procedural justice relates to the fairness of the decision-making process surrounding organizational outcomes, how the outcomes are defined is usually more important than the outcomes themselves (DeConinck and Stilwell, 2004). As such, when employees view decision-making procedures to be accurate, consistent, unbiased, and correctable they perceive organizational systems as following processes that meet justice criteria (Colquitt, Scott, Judge, & Shaw, 2006). In contrast, when employees feel that there has been an unjust distribution of organizational outcomes, they first question the procedures which produce these outcomes, and after concluding that the procedures are not fair, they seek to change their performance in order to restore justice in the organization (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001). In this context, procedural justice, similar to distributive justice, affects the emotions, attitudes and behaviors of employees in an organization (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Ambrose et al., 2002).

Colquitt and Chertkoff (2002) found that even while explaining unfair or inconsistent justice procedures, organizations which allow employees to voice their dissatisfaction and propose suggestions regarding it ultimately led to stronger bonding between individuals and organizations. This is because, according to fairness theory and the relational model of justice, fairness in the process of mitigating allocation of outcomes conveys the message that employees are valuable to the organization. This boosts their self-esteem and self-worth and assures them that they are being given due attention in return for their services (Colquitt & Chertkoff, 2002). Similarly, procedural justice perception affects the attitude and behaviors of employees in the organization regarding decisions made by managers, and at the same time it carries a symbolic function, such as strengthening the relationship between employees and managers.
Therefore, procedural justice, by increasing employees’ trust in the manager, organization and organizational commitment, can produce positive organizational results (Greenberg, 1990; Suliman and Kathairi, 2013). Thus, procedural justice enhances perceptions of mutual obligations between employer and employees as it strengthens idiosyncratic beliefs arising out of cognitive appraisals of circumstances (Rousseau, 1995).

In addition, organizational support theory (OST) suggests that employees sometimes ascribe humanlike attributes to their organizations and actions taken by organizational agents such as managers are viewed as the organizations’ intentions (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). In keeping with OST, employees interpret organizational activities such as HR practices as indicative of the organization’s commitment towards them (Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996). Based on such anthropomorphism, employees view fair or unfair practices and procedures of the organization as indicators of the degree to which the latter values the contribution made by the former and cares about the former’s well-being. Thus, within the SET framework and norms of reciprocity, employees are likely to show high level of work engagement. Consequently, it is expected that employees’ perception of procedural justice will foster work engagement.

**Interactional Justice and Work Engagement**

Employees tend to cherish justice when communicating with their employers and managers. Interactional justice refers to the perceived fairness of the interpersonal treatment used within the organization to determine outcomes (Colquitt, 2001). Interactional justice is concerned with informing employees the decisions taken by organization as well as about attitudes and behaviors to which employees are exposed to during the application of organizational decisions (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Liao and Tai, 2006). In other words, it expresses the quality of attitude and behaviors to which employees are exposed during the practice of (distributive and procedural) operations by managers (Greenberg, 1993; Liao and Tai, 2006). According to Bies and Moag (1986), it is the fairness of the interpersonal treatment employees receives during the enactment of organizational procedures (Bies & Moag, 1986). It focuses on the sensitivity, politeness and respect employees receive from their superiors during procedures. This serves primarily to alter reactions to outcomes, because sensitivity can make people feel better even if the outcome is unfavourable (Pilvinyte, 2013).

Interactional justice is composed of two sub-dimensions, interpersonal justice and informational justice (Cropanzano et al., 2007). Interpersonal justice is concerned with the importance of kindness, respect and esteem in interpersonal relations, particularly in the relationships between employees and managers. On the other hand, informational justice involves furnishing employees properly and correctly with matters concerning organizational decision making.

Cojuharencoc and Patient (2013) argue that employees focus on job results when they consider justice in the workplace, and they are likely to focus on the methods of communication and reciprocal relationships within the organization when they consider injustice. As such, if the interactions of managers or manager representatives with employees occur in a just way, employees will respond with higher job performance (Settoon et al., 1996; Masterson et al., 2000; Cropanzano et al., 2007). Interactional justice can lead to strong interpersonal interactions and communication over time (Lerner, 2003; Cropanzano et al., 2007). According to social exchange theory, the positive or negative effect of employee-manager relationships on job performance stems from interactional justice (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Settoon et al., 1996; Wayne et al., 1997; Cropanzano et al., 2002). Accordingly, if employees are satisfied with their relationships with the manager, apart from their formalized roles, they will volunteer to acquire additional roles, which will increase their contextual performance.

In addition to financial incentives, interactional justice has been highlighted as another way to increase employee productivity (Cropanzano et al., 2002; Rupp and Cropanzano, 2002; Cropanzano et al., 2007). According to Lind and Tyler (1988), employees have concerns about their relationships with management on the basis of interactional justice. Relational concerns stem from the fairness of the relationships that occur between employees and administrators during distribution of organizational outcomes. A fair relationship between managers and employees and themselves will give the employee the sense of being an esteemed and recognized part of the organization. These positive feelings can stimulate employees to reciprocate by engaging in extra role behaviors beyond their official job roles (Nasurdin and Khuan, 2011). In this context, interactional justice is expected to significantly correlate with employee work engagement. In their study (Alvi & Abbasi, 2012) found that interactional has positive influence on employee engagement and contributed 11.5% variation in employee engagement.

**Hypotheses**
1. There will be significant positive relationships between organizational justices, namely, distributive, procedural, and interactional and employee work engagement.
2. Employees of public sector organization will have higher perceptions of organizational justice than those of private sector organization, and
3. Employees of private sector organization will exhibit higher level of work engagement than those of public sector organization.

Method
Research Design
This study was cross-sectional survey as the participants’ characteristics were studied at a single point in time. Cross sectional surveys have been described as snapshots of the populations about which a researcher gather data (Aron & Aron, 1999). In the present study, data were collected at a single point for each participant studied.

Participants
Participants for the study were made up of 118 employees (60 females and 58 males), 63 from public tertiary institutions and 55 from private tertiary institutions all in Enugu, Nigeria. The age distribution ranged from 25 to 53 years and the average age was 30.85 (SD = 7.26). Convenient sampling was used to select the participants from the targeted public and private institutions. They were sampled irrespective of their age, gender, marital status, religion, educational level, job and organizational tenure. On an average they had worked with the organization for 8.4 years. These organizations were chosen as pairings with similar structures, interest, policies, goals and business strength. All the participants were full-time employees. Appropriate consent was sought from the management of the institutions and all the participants who indicated interest were made to fill the research questionnaire. A total of one hundred and fifty copies of the questionnaire instrument were administered to the participants in their respective workplaces. Out of the number, only one hundred and eighteen were properly filled and returned and used for analyses thereby representing 78.7% response rate.

Instruments

*Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)*
Employee work engagement was assessed with an adapted version of Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The 9-item UWES assesses three underlying dimensions of employee engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption. A total score of 9 - 31 on the UWES indicated a low score whereas a total score of 32 – 63 indicated a high score. Respondents in this study rated each item on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “never” (1) to “always” (7). The scale included statements such as “my job inspires me” and “I feel happy when I am working intensely”. The scale has a Cronbach alpha score of .94.

In adapting the UWES (UWES-9) versions for Nigerian samples, Ugwu (2013) used a sample of 268 employees from two occupational groups and reported the internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha) of 0.76, 0.79, and 0.74 for the dimensions of vigour, dedication, and absorption respectively while a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.91 was reported for the composite scales. A test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.87 after three weeks interval was obtained (Ugwu, 2013). Thus, the instruments can be used for Nigerian samples.

*Organizational Justice Scale (OJS)*
The perception of organizational justice was measured by 20-item Organizational Justice Scale developed by Niehoff and Moorman (1993). The scale measures the organizational justice along the dimensions of distributive, procedural and interactional justice. The distributive justice aspect was measured with five items relevant to employees’ justice perceptions of outcomes such as job programs, wages, workload, rewards and job responsibilities. The procedural justice aspect was measured with six items that evaluate employees’ justice perceptions regarding organizational procedures and processes for decision making and registering objections. The interactional justice aspect was measured with 9 items that evaluate employees’ judgments of the extent to which administrators take employees into consideration, show them respect and provide clear understandable explanations of their job responsibilities. The items of the questionnaire were configured using five point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). High scores indicate high level perception of organizational justice and vice versa.

*Validation of Organizational Justice Scale*
In order to adapt the 20-item Organizational Justice Scale developed by Niehoff and Moorman (1993) for Nigerian samples, the psychometric properties of the instruments in terms of its reliability and validity were assessed by the researcher. In other words, an initial study was carried out to ascertain the
suitability of the instruments. The instruments were pre-tested using a sample of 100 respondents drawn from both private and public sector organizations other than those organizations used for the actual study.

The reliability of the instruments was assessed using Cronbach alpha method. For the individual scales, distributive, procedural and interactional justice dimensions achieved a Cronbach’s coefficient alpha (α) of .73, .79, and .70 respectively. Per the recommendation of Nunnally (1978), all the reliability values of the instruments met the required threshold.

The structural validity of the instrument was assessed by an exploratory factor analysis performed using the principal components factor analysis to ascertain whether the three-factor structure of Niehoff and Moorman (1993) Organizational Justice Scale would hold. In the first analysis, four factors emerged, which almost loaded strongly in the factors, but when the Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization analysis was performed on the data, a three clear factor model emerged (See Appendix Table 4). Based on the above finding, the instrument is perceived as a three-factor model in Nigeria representing employee perception of organization justice. This is consistent with earlier studies on OJS (e.g., Niehoff & Moorman, 1993) whose factor analyses supported the hypothesized correlated three-factor structure.

Control variables.

As in other empirical studies related to employee performance (e.g., Nasurdin and Khuan, 2011; Suliman and Kathari, 2013; Taylor and Beh, 2013), gender, age and job tenure variables are control variables in this study. Gender was coded as binary (Male = 1, Female = 2), while the age and job tenure variables were coded in years.

Results

The first hypothesis investigated the relationships between organizational justices, namely, distributive, procedural, interactional, and employee work engagement. The hypothesis was tested using Pearson’s Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient. Summary of the results together with descriptive statistics and relationships between some demographic variables and employee work engagement are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Means, SD and correlation among study variables

| Variables     | Mean | SD  | 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   | 8   | 9   | 10  |
|---------------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Age           | 8.58 | 1.68| .13*| 1.00|     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Gender        | 6.08 | 2.80| .12*| .23*| 1.00|     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Job tenure    | 6.89 | 2.59| .12*| .23*| 1.00|     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| DJ            | 3.25 | 1.56| .99 | -.07| .07 | 1.00|     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| PJ            | 3.34 | 1.82| -.01| .04 | .03 | .48*| 1.00|     |     |     |     |     |     |
| IJ            | 4.13 | 1.71| -.06| -.06| -.03| .39*| .25*| 1.00|     |     |     |     |     |
| Vigour        | 4.76 | 1.90| .11*| .13 | .10 | .27*| .27*| .23*| 1.00|     |     |     |     |
| Dedication    | 5.13 | 1.72| .17*| .16 *| .13*| .24*| .25*| .26*| .76**| 1.00|     |     |     |
| Absorption    | 5.11 | 1.43| .12*| .14*| .17*| .28*| .21*| .24*| .75**| .75**| 1.00|     |     |
| EWE           | 5.00 | 1.47| .13*| .15*| .16*| .49**| .32*| .27*| .88**| .92**| .90**| 1.00|

Notes: N = 118; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05; DJ =Distributive Justice; PJ = Procedural Justice; IJ =Interactional Justice; and EWE = Employee Work Engagement.

As can be observed from the Table 1, the control variables, age [r (116) = .13, p < .05], gender [r (116) = .15, p < .05] and job tenure [r (116) = .16, p < .05] achieved significant positive relationships with employee work engagement. As regards the study main hypotheses, there was a significant positive relationship between employees’ perceptions of distributive justice and employee work engagement [r (116) = 0.49, p < 0.01], procedural justice and employee work engagement [r (116) = 0.32, p < 0.05], and interactional justice and employee work engagement [r (116) = 0.27, p < 0.05]. Thus, the first hypothesis which stated that there will be significant positive relationships between organizational justices and employee work engagement is supported. The results also showed that the three dimensions of work engagement – vigour [r (116) = .88, p < .01], dedication [r (116) = .92, p < .01], and absorption [r (116) = .90, p < .01] were significantly and highly correlated to employee work engagement. This justifies the use of employee work engagement composite score.

The second hypothesis examined differences in the perception of organizational justice categorized by organizations, i.e. public and private sectors organization. Independents’ samples t-test was used to test the hypothesis and the summary of the results are presented in Table 2.
Table 2: Results of t-test showing the differences in perception organizational justice by private and public sector organization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Justice</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p - value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>-1.50</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis two examined the differences in the employee work engagement scores with respect to public and private sector organizations. The independent sample t-test was used to test the hypothesis. Summary of the results are presented in Table 4.

Discussion

The study adopted both correlation and comparative approach to study organizational justice and employee work engagement. The first hypothesis that there will be a significant positive relationship between organizational justice (distributive, procedural, interactional) and employee work engagement were supported by the analysis. The correlation analysis shows that there is a positive correlation between organizational justice dimensions of distributive, procedural and interactional justice and the employee work engagement. The relationships indicate that employees who have positive perception of justice in their organization are inclined to show high levels of energy and mental resilience at work (May, Gilson & Harter, 2004; George, 2011; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). In addition, this indicates that the employees showed significant levels of concentration and were happily engaged in their role (May et al, 2004; Bakker et al, 2011; Taris et al, 2010). In other words, the employees demonstrated high levels of involvement in their work and they were likely to experience high levels of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge in their roles (Halbesleben, 2011; Schaufeli et al, 2008). These findings imply that employees who are given the necessary resources by their organizations to perform their tasks effectively tend to respond favourably to the organizations by being engaged in their work. The findings are consistent with those of Saks (2006) who established that engagement of employees mediated the relationships between the antecedents and job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intentions to quit the job, and organizational citizenship behavior. The findings are also in agreement with that of Hakanen, Bakker and Schaufeli (2006), which established that work engagement mediated the effects of job resources on organizational commitment. The reason for the result can be explained with the Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008) and the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) which contend that employees who receive socioeconomic resources from their organization are obliged to respond and repay their organizations in some form leading to an increased work engagement toward the organization. As Badu and Asumeng (2013) argued, engagement in any given role indicates better interaction between employer and employee which leads to positive work outcomes.

The second hypothesis that employees of public sector organizations will have higher perceptions of organizational justice than those of private sector organization was not supported. The t-test analysis shows that there was no significant difference in perception of organizational justice by public and private sectors organizations. This indicates that employees of public and private sector organization do not seem to have differences in the perceptions of all organizational justice dimensions. Therefore, the results suggests that both public and private sector organization employees who perceive organizational justice in service delivery are inclined to be dedicated and highly involved in their work. The Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008) and the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) could explain this result.
These theories contend that employees who receive socioeconomic resources from their organization are obliged to respond and repay their organizations in some form leading to an increased work engagement toward the organization. Thus, employees who are engaged actively in their organization may have a feeling of obligation to respond and repay the organization in some form (Cohen, 2000).

However, the third hypothesis that employees of private sector organization will exhibit higher level of work engagement than those of public sector organization was supported. This indicates that employees of private educational institutions had a higher level of work engagement than employees of public sector institution. The findings are in disagreement with the understanding that most public educational institutions in Nigeria are known to offer better incentives such as salary packages, job security, retirement benefits, transportation allowance, housing allowance, mortgage facilities, free medical care, leave allowances etc than the private ones and as such should be more engaged in their work than the employees of private sector institutions. However, the findings are expected because in Nigeria, the popular slogan is that “you don’t carry government work on the head but rather on the shoulder”. This indicates the extent of work disengagement among employees of public sector organization in Nigeria. But the finding is consistent with that of Acheampong (2003) who found that most private organizations are known to offer several incentives and packages to keep their members performing higher compared to public organizations. The findings that employees of private educational institutions had a higher level of work engagement than employees of public sector institution could be explained by the high rate of unemployment in Nigeria. Worsened by leadership failure, Nigerian economic situation has resulted in poor social infrastructure, under capacity utilizations, high unemployment and poverty, uncertainty, tension and job insecurity to the extent that workers have to ensure by all means to hold on tenaciously to their jobs. Those who are opportune to be employed have no choice but to remain engaged or face the risk of losing their jobs. Nowadays the situation is worsened by the current economic downturn and the attendant recession which makes it highly necessary that workers have to remain in the workforce by investing themselves cognitively, emotionally and physically in their role performance.

**Implications of the study**

The findings of this study have one or two practical implications for organizations, policy makers and employees. Firstly, these finding are noteworthy because it offers organizations practical means of promoting their employees’ work engagement levels. Based on the findings of this study, to increase organizational justices and in effect employee work engagement, organizations should provide resources that foster employee growth, learning, and development. As the JD-R model and Social Exchange Theory posit, when employees work in a resourceful environment where they can get immediate support from supervisors who serve as an embodiment of management, employees are more likely to reciprocate in productive behaviors.

Secondly, since this study has proven that organizational justices has statistical relationships with employee work engagement, organizations should be able to develop relevant interventions to foster positive perceptions of organizational justices which may ultimately help to create a more engaged workforce in organizations.

**Limitations and directions for future research**

This study is subject to some limitations that may provide other scholars with new research directions. In the first place, the study sample is restricted to employees of tertiary educational institutions which may limit the generalization of the study results. Studies with larger sampling groups in different sectors are important to increase the generalization of the findings of this study. Second, the cross-sectional nature of this study may make it difficult to make causal inferences. As McFarlin and Sweeney (1992) stated, longitudinal studies about organizational justices can provide healthier results with regards to cause and effect relationships. Third, this study measured employee work engagement using self-report inventory which is a subjective measurement that is widely used in the literature (e.g., Furnham and Stringfield, 1998; Walumbwa et al., 2009). Future studies should use supervisor-rating in addition to self-rating of engagement as such measurement based on both assessments will result in a more objective assessment. Finally, this study was conducted in the Nigerian context. As scholars argue that cultural differences may affect employees’ justice perceptions (e.g., Leung and Stephan, 2001; Reithel et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2010; Crawshaw et al., 2013; Khan et al., 2015), studies from other different cultures are important for improving the generalization of results.

**Conclusion**
Findings of this study suggest that organizational justices play important role in promoting employee work engagement in tertiary educational sector. Thus, employee work engagement may be fostered by employing organizational systems which strengthen justices in and around organizational practices. This study provides evidence to stakeholders and practitioners to build justice in all procedures and systems of the organization so as to guarantee loyal and committed employees to improve organizational productivity and efficiency.

References


**Appendix**

**Table 4: The Standardized item loadings and cross loadings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Distributive justice</th>
<th>Procedural justice</th>
<th>Interactional justice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DJ1</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DJ2</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DJ3</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DJ4</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DJ5</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PJ1</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PJ2</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PJ3</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PJ4</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PJ5</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PJ6</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IJ1</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IJ2</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IJ3</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IJ4</td>
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<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IJ5</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IJ6</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.30</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>IJ8</td>
<td>0.33</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>IJ9</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Item loadings values are given in bold.