Perceived Organisational Justice and Turnover Intention among Employees of Nigeria Police Academy: Perceived Alternative Employment Opportunities as Moderator

Moses Ichongo Ukeh[1*] and Ignatius Hua Nyam[2]

[1]Department of Psychology, Nigeria Police Academy Wudil, Kano, Nigeria

[2]Department of Liberal Studies, Nigeria Police Academy Wudil, Kano, Nigeria

*Corresponding author: Moses Ichongo Ukeh, Department of Psychology, Nigeria Police Academy Wudil, Kano, Nigeria, Tel: 09166611162; E-mail: superlifeconsulting@gmail.com

Abstract

The issue of fairness in human transactions and organisational interaction is indispensable for the retention of employees, but many organisations hardly take it seriously. This study was done to explore organisational justice perceptions and turnover intentions among employees of the Nigeria police academy Wudil, Kano, and verify how their perception of available employment opportunities moderates the relationship. A cross-sectional survey was carried out among 75 employees, comprising 70 males and five females of varying ages ranging from 25 to 57 with a mean age of 42.8 years, who responded to three standardised instruments: *Organizational justice*, *perceived alternative employment opportunities*, and *turnover intention*. Regression statistics, the Hayes process macro for SPSS was used for analysis via IBM SPSS (version 26). Results showed that perceived organisational justice was positively related but failed to significantly predict turnover intention ($b=0.34$, $t=1.67$, $p =>0.05$), contrary to earlier research literature. However, perceived alternative employment opportunities positively predicted significantly turnover intention ($b=2.87$, $t=3.80$, $p=<0.001$), and inversely moderated the relationship between perceived organisational justice and turnover intention ($b=-0.09$, $t=2.98$, $p<.01$) among the employees. It was concluded that employees who perceive higher alternative employment opportunities when perceived organisational justice is low were more likely to leave the organisation. The discussion was made in light of the findings and recommendations made.

Keywords: *Perceived organisational justice; Perceived alternative employment opportunities; Turnover intention; Employees; Nigeria police academy*

1. Introduction

An employee's intention to leave one's employing organization is usually predicated on several factors but a breach in the relationship seems fundamental and portends serious social and economic consequences specifically when such intentions are carried out. Organisational justice, which refers to fairness or otherwise of reward patterns and interactions among parties within an organization can make or mar the corporate relationship resulting in employee intentions to leave [1,2], especially for those who perceive available alternative job opportunities exist in the labour market.

Perceived organisational justice refers to how fairly or otherwise employees are treated at work by management. While turnover intention refers to the tendency of an employee to quit the job or move to another on choice. While perceived alternative employment opportunities (PAEO) refers to the perceived availability of other jobs in the labour market an employee can leverage upon if willing. The intention of an employee to remain in or quit the service of a particular organisation is predicated on whether s/he perceives fairness or not. This notwithstanding, supposing the chances of getting another job are easy or almost impossible, could become instructive in supporting or discouraging the intention and actual behaviour. It is therefore the opposite to suggest that PAEO can influence the relationship between perceived organisational justice and turnover intention.

2. Literature Review and the Problem Statement

Employee behaviours and practices at work are affected by organizational behaviour, choices, and activities [3]. One such behaviour is organizational justice which Mengstie [4] noted is not only a predictor of organizational success but also the most important determinant factor for the effective utilization of human resources in social institutions [5]. The turnover intention has to do with how positive or negative employees feel at work and is a determinant of whether to remain or willingly leave the organisation [6]. Employees who have the turnover intention are likely to exhibit negligent behaviours, unwillingness to the assigned duty, and expression of their dissatisfaction [7]. The world over, research spanning different disciplines and employee segments has consistently reported significant negative relations between the social interaction constructs - organizational behaviour and employee turnover intentions [8-12]; and some considering factors moderating or mediating effects on the relationship [13,14,2]. The import of those findings is that higher organisational justice diminishes employee intentions to leave and vice versa.

Mushtaq et al [15] posited that more available alternative employment opportunities change the attitudes of employees towards their current employment status. An individual's PAEO has the potential to drag employees to consider alternatives [7]. However, this perception is dependent on the employees' skill sets and experience [16], as well as the general labour market conditions. In a tight labour market situation, where plenty alternative jobs exist, resignation rate are expected to be higher than a loose labour market where jobs are scarce, such as Nigeria. Hulin et al [17] posited that the availability of alternative jobs in abundance is likely to create dissatisfaction with current employment, thereby stimulating intentions to leave no matter how fair the incumbent organisation.

Organisational justice has been found to be a significant predictor, not only of turnover intention but also of employees' job attitudes and outcomes, such as organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and trust [18-23,7]. Studies by Elovainio, et al [24] and Magnavita, et al [25] report the health implications of employee unfair treatment in their organizations. In their view,

they may present physical and mental health symptoms (feel unhappy and irritated resulting into dissatisfaction or distress) and increased risk of sickness absence from work. Perceived injustice often diminishes the motivation of workers to accomplish their duties because of a loss of loyalty and commitment [26]. Moreover, such employees are not likely to serve their organization for a longer period of time. Whenever they find better opportunities, they are more likely to quit the organisation.

The negative effects of organisational injustice on employees go beyond the intention to leave. Some scholars have considered organizational justice as a predictor of health [24,27]. Greenberg viewed it as an occupational health risk. Recently, Magnavita, et al. [25] study suggests that the perceived level of organizational justice influences occupational stress, and in turn, affects the physical and mental health of workers. Though many of the studies are yet to provide conclusive evidence on the relationships, it is a pointer to a new research focus. The picture painted by these studies indicates that employees who can't leave their organisations because of a lack of alternative employment opportunities under barefaced inequities could be risking their health.

The perceptions of employees vary in relation to different justice systems, that is, whether it has to do with the distribution of rewards, the procedures followed and the interactional system within the organisation. This study only considered distributive and interactive or interpersonal justice systems adopted by Choi [28]. The reason is that a procedural justice scale measures appeal procedures for correction and bias suppression regarding how rewards are fairly distributed [29-31], but this doesn't exist in Nigerian organisations, not even in universities. That is why most employees and students versus management grievances which could have been resolved through internal grievance procedures end up in court.

Adams [32] equity theory collaborates highly with the psychological bases of inequity perception presumed to be experienced by the staff of the academy. The theory stipulates that employees expect a fair return for what they contribute to their jobs (equity norm), determine what their equitable return should be after comparing their inputs and outcomes with those of co-workers (social comparison), and those who perceive themselves as being in an inequitable situation will seek to reduce the inequality either by distorting inputs and/or outcomes in their own minds (cognitive distortion), by directly altering inputs and/or outputs, or by leaving the organisation.

In virtually all organisations, regardless of how small or large, workplace fairness is a major concern of employees [4]. Nigeria Police Academy is one such regimented social academic institution where the management relationship between the police and academic wing is not harmonious, leading to administrative hiccups that affect negatively staff welfare. This discrepant situation has engendered more concerns from civilian employees about organizational justice insensitivity. Since the inception of the police university in 2013, successive administrations have disregarded the quality of social interaction between management and staff. This has forced many academic employees who have high skill sets and experience (senior lecturers and above) to take up appointments with other organisations. If this nonchalant attitude persists, there is a high likelihood that many more qualified staff may leave the university, if they perceive more available alternative employment opportunities. The consequences for the organisation in manpower loss on productivity and mission accomplishment are enormous. Aside from low-quality police officers' production. When dissatisfied employees leave, those who may remain might resort to counterproductive engagements with management to reduce injustice or resort to distortion in inputs/outputs or outcomes [32] which would undermine the success of the organisation.

This study, therefore, explores the relationship between organizational justice and turnover intentions and verifies whether or not PAEO moderates the relationship among civilian employees of the Nigeria Police Academy. This study happens to be the first in a tertiary institution in Nigeria and its findings could provide scientific evidence to researchers and inform higher institutions management policies on human resources.

In addition, it could contribute to knowledge in the related fields of psychology and social sciences in general concerned with human resources development and the well-being of workers. The hypotheses proposed are H1: perceived organisational justice will negatively and significantly predict turnover intention among employees of Nigeria police academy; H2: perceived alternative employment opportunities will positively and significantly predict turnover intention among employees of Nigeria police academy; and H3: perceived alternative employment opportunities is likely to negatively moderate the relationship between organisational justice and turnover intention among employees of Nigeria police academy.

3. Methods

3.1 Participants

The study population consist of employees drawn from the permanent academic and support civilian wing of the Nigeria Police Academy who has been working for the organisation since 2015. Participants totalled seventy-five (75) employees, out of which 70 (93.3%) were males and only five (6.7%) were females. Their ages range from 25 to 57 with a mean age of (42.8 years). The employees were also demographically assessed on rank, qualification religious affiliation, and their respective departments. A summary of these demographics indicates the rank of Lecturer I with the highest frequency of respondents 37(49.3%), followed by Senior Lecturer 23(30.7%), while the ranks of Administrative Officer, Assistant Registrar, and Clerical officer were nine (12%), four (5.3%) and two (2.7%) respectively.

On the factor of qualification, those with PhD degree had the highest frequency of 35(46.7%), closely followed by a master's degree 28(37.3), while First degree/Higher National Diploma and National Certificate in Education/National Diploma were Eight (10.7%), and Four (5.3%) respectively. These response characteristics provide evidence that people with higher qualifications and academics, in particular, are more responsive to requests for participation in research activities.

Again, among these participants, 53(70.3%) were Christians and 22(29.7%) Moslems. Finally, classification according to department shows the Registry department with the highest frequency of respondents 13(17.3%), since they work in every academic department too. Sociology, English/Linguistics, and Psychology had 12(16%), 11(14.7%), and 10(13.3%) respondents respectively. Similarly, History, Economics, and Sciences had Nine (12%), Seven (9.3%), and Five (6.7%) respondents respectively, while Biology and Political Science had Four (5.3%) respondents each. The convenient sampling method was preferred to easily reach participants and to obtain a response [33].

3.2 Research design

A survey research design is used for the purpose of this study because self-reports are more appropriate for constructs that reflect subjective judgements about human experiences and behaviour. Again, it was more economical, and time-saving in terms of speed.

3.3 Instruments

Organizational justice will be measured using the [28] 15 items constructed from the 2005 Merit Based Principles Survey, published by the US Merit System Protection Board (MSPB). Distributive justice was measured through seven items (α=.896), procedural justice through three items (α=.889), and interactive/interpersonal justice through five items (α=.871). However, only distributive and interpersonal justice systems were considered. Staff were asked to rate the extent to which they believe to be fairly treated in the past 2 years on seven distributive justice areas: career advancement, awards, training, pay, discipline, job assignments and performance appraisal. Interpersonal justice requires participants' perception of to what extent a supervisor (sup) would exercise each of the 5 authorities in a fair and effective manner, e,g.,

1. Sup fair - selecting people for vacancies or promotion based on their qualifications.
2. Sup fair - determining pay increases and awards, etc.

All items utilize a five-point scale where 1=*To a Very Small Extent*, 2=*To a Small Extent*, 3=*To a Moderate Extent*, 4=*To a Large Extent*, and 5=*To a Very Large Extent*. This level of measurement scale without the 'undecided' option is considered in this study to offset the possible central tendency bias characteristic of Asian and African respondents [34]. The overall Cronbach reliability for Organizational Justice in this study was (α=.786) for the 12 items, and individually (α=.734; and α=.735) for distributive and interactive/interpersonal justices respectively.

PAEO scale is gotten from the established two items measure [35]. The same five-point Likert scale is adopted, and these two questions are: 1) There is a high probability that you can find an acceptable alternative to your job, and 2) You can find an alternative job within a year's time if you search for it. The Cronbach's alpha reliability ratio for PAEO in this study was (α=.820).

Turnover intention is a three items measure extracted from the Michigan Organisational Assessment Scale [36]. Again, a five-point Likert scale is adopted. The three items are: 1) You frequently think about leaving your current organization; 2) It is likely that you will actively look for a job in the next year; and 3) You will probably look for a job in the next year. Similarly, the Cronbach's alpha reliability ratio for turnover intention in this study was (α=.891). All of the scales reflected high and acceptable response ratios among participants to warrant statistical analysis.

3.4 Procedure

Participants were approached at the senate building which houses offices for faculty and support staff by the researcher after permission was granted by the ethics committee to conduct the study. After I explained the nature of the study and assured them that their personal information would be confidential and treated for research purposes alone. I then solicited their consent to participate in the study. Those who agreed were given the questionnaire and told what they were required to do. The participants were informed of the freedom to withdraw at any stage of the study, but if they choose to go on, should give honest responses to all questions as there were no right or wrong answers. The distribution and collection of the questionnaire were instantaneous as there were few items to complete. It took just a week to collect the data, but only fully completed questionnaires were considered and used in the analysis.

3.5 Data analysis

Pearson's correlation (*r*) analysis was conducted among the study's variables, predictors, and dependent variables, while the PROCESS Macro for SPSS [37] was used for simple moderation analysis via IBM SPSS (version 26).

3.6 Results

Descriptive and correlation results shown in TABLE 1 indicated that among the entire demographic variables, qualification (*r=0.35*, *p*<0.01), and religion (*r=-0.46*, *p*<0.01), significantly correlated with turnover intention (TI). Employee rank (*r=0.27*, *p*<0.05) and religion (*r=0.24*, *p* < 0.05) correlated with perceived alternative employment opportunities (PAEO) and perceived organizational justice (POJ) respectively. The result also shows that PAEO correlated positively (*r=0.31*, *p*<0.01) with TI, while POJ correlated negatively with TI.

TABLE 1. **Descriptive and correlation statistics of demographic and study variables.**

	Qualif	Age	Gender	Dept.	Rank	Religion	TI	PAEO	POJ
qualif	-								
age	.568**	-							
gender	.331**	.453**	-						
dept	.095	.242*	.168	-					
rank	.181	.184	.302**	.025	-				
religion	-537**	-.212	.055	.069	-.007	-			
TI	.354**	-.151	-.111	-.196	.132	-.464**	-		
PAEO	.077	.053	.183	.008	.265*	.029	**.310****	-	
POJ	-.189	.162	-.051	.104	.128	.238*	**-.413****	**.112**	-

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). ** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). *

According to TABLE 2 results from Hayes PROCESS, the overall moderation model had significant effects F (3, 71) =14.33, p<.001. The r^2=.377 indicates the model explains approximately 38% of the variance in turnover intention among employees, and the overall interaction was significant. The result indicated that POJ did not significantly predict TI (b=0.34, t=1.67, p=>0.05). The first hypothesis which states that Perceived Organisational Justice will significantly predict the turnover intention of employees is not supported and therefore rejected.

TABLE 2. **Hayes PROCESS Macro result for moderating role of PAEO on the relationship between POJ and TI.**

Variables	B	SE	T	P
Constant	-1.80 (-12.25, 8.66)	5.245	-0.342	P = .733
Org.justice	0.34 (-0.07, 0.76)	0.206	1.669	P = .099
PAEO	2.87 (1.36, 4.37)	0.755	3.798	P < .001
Org.Justice x PEAO	-0.09 (-0.15, -0.03)	0.030	-2.975	P < .01

Note: r^2=38, b, regression coefficient, with lower and upper limit confident interval; SE, standard error; t, population t value; p, probability level.

On the other hand, the result from same table 2 discovered that PAEO significantly and positively predicted TI (b=2.87, t=3.80, p=<0.001), indicating that for every one-unit rise in PAEO, TI increases by 2.87 units. This result is consistent with the second hypothesis that PAEO will significantly and positively predict turnover intention and is accepted.

The study further assessed the moderating role of PAEO on the relationship between POJ and turnover intention. The result revealed a negative and significant influence of PAEO on the relationship between POJ and TI (b=-0.09, t=2.98, p<.01). This result supports the third hypothesis H3, which states that PAEO will significantly and negatively moderate the relationship between perceived organizational justice and turnover intention of employees as presented in moderation analysis table 2 and is accepted.

Results of simple slope analysis to better understand the nature of the moderating effects are shown in FIG. 1. As can be seen, the simple slopes for the association between POJ and turnover intention tested for se =16th, 50th and 84th percentiles, representing low, average and high conditioning values of the moderator (PAEO). The simple slope test results demonstrated a negative association between POJ and turnover intention, but POJ did not predict turnover intention for those with low PAEO (b =- 0.00, se=0.10 p=0.99).

However, the impact became significant at moderate PAEO (b=- 0.18, se=0.06, p=< 0.01), and for those with high PAEO (b=-0.36, se=0.06, p=< 0.001). It shows that PAEO has enormous impact on the relationship between perceived organisational justice and turnover intention, but specifically for employees who perceive moderate and high alternative employment opportunities when perceived organisational justice is low.
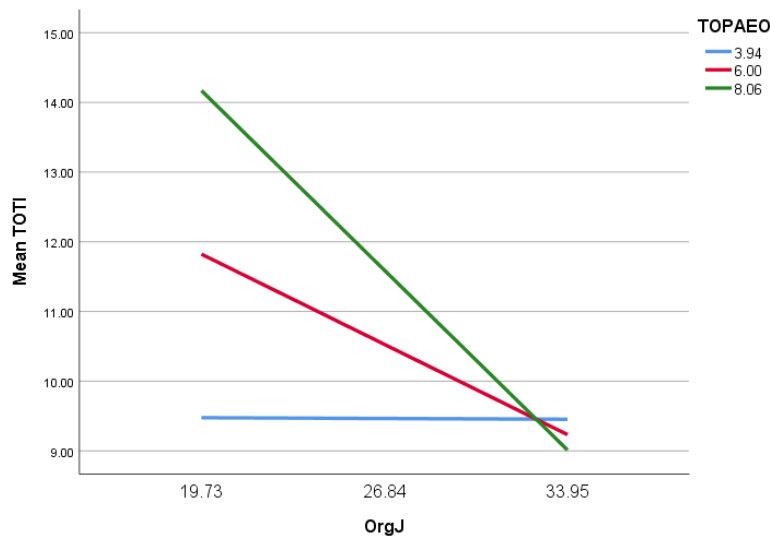
FIG. 1. **Interaction slope showing the moderating effect of PAEO on POJ and TI.**

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study set out to explore the relationship between perceived organisational justice and turnover intention of Nigeria police academy employees and further examined the moderating role of perceived alternative employment opportunities on the relationship between perceived organisational justice and turnover intention. The results show that perceived organisational justice did not significantly predict turnover intention as purported in Hypothesis 1. Perceived alternative employment opportunities positively and significantly predicted turnover intention, supporting hypothesis 2. And finally, the result supported hypothesis 3 that perceived alternative employment Opportunities will moderate the relationship between perceived organisational justice and turnover intention.

The correlation results suggest that perceived organisational justice is negatively and significantly related to turnover intention. However, in the regression result, perceived organisational justice is positively related, but did not significantly predict turnover intention, thus, the first hypothesis is rejected. The implication of this finding to the study is that a unit increase in perception of organisational justice would lead to a resultant increase in turnover intentions among the employees. This finding is inconsistent with earlier interpretations [13,10,4,2,38] who established that perceived organizational justice has a negative and significant effect on turnover intention. The fact that the model explains only 38% of the variance in turnover intention, means turnover intention can be influenced by other variables such as individual determinants and social context [39].

Naturally, one would expect organizational justice perceptions to be positively related to desirable work attitudes of employees such as increased job satisfaction, commitment, and positive evaluation of leadership [28], but the reverse is the case here. In my opinion, two possible reasons can be adduced for this unexpected result - learned helplessness and cognitive dissonance. In the first instance, the absence of organisational justice procedures - the criterion by which employees can compare or define fairness, made them learn to expect that their actions will have no effect on the justice situation in the academy [40]. Consequently, organisational justice may not necessarily serve as an influential factor in their turnover intention. The second is that as employees don't get what they deserve - justice-wise, but based on favours and sentiments, their perception of organisational justice is distorted, leading to an employee holding two contradictory beliefs (cognitive dissonance), and this

may alter their responses to save face [41]. These two states (learned helplessness and cognitive dissonance) have the capacity to influence response rating in the study.

Although, not an empirical conclusion, it engenders further investigation, especially with concerns to response configurations of the participants as well as their characteristics regarding perceptions of organisational justice interactions in a non-conventional university.

Again, results showed that perceived alternative employment positively and significantly predicted turnover intentions among employees and supports the second hypothesis. As the relationship is positive, it implies an increase in perception of alternatives triggers an increase in intention to leave. That is, employees who perceived higher alternative employment opportunities exist outside the academy were more influenced to have higher intentions of leaving the organisation. This finding is consistent with previous literature [42,2]. To show the dynamics of the relationship between perceived alternative employment opportunities and turnover intention, Chew and Ng [43] suggest that knowledge workers like the faculty in the case of police academy develop a benchmark based on their current position and experience of work. They then, use this benchmark to compare against alternatives. Whether or not the comparison meets expectations determines the employee's decision to remain or leave the present employment [17].

Finally, the findings of this study indicate that perceived alternative employment opportunities moderated the relationship between perceived organisational justice and turnover intention. This finding is consistent with that of Shuaibu et al [2]. The higher the perception of job alternatives, the lower the strength of the relationship between perceived organisational justice and turnover intention, and vice versa.

In conclusion, perceptions of organizational justice are negatively associated with employees' intentions to leave the police academy, suggesting that in organizations maintaining high levels of organizational justice, employees may have lower levels of intention to leave their organizations. However, organisations with ambiguous organisational justice may not reflect a clear-cut relationship between justice perception and turnover intentions of employees. Also, employees with higher perceptions of alternative employment opportunities showed higher levels of intention to leave. Finally, the perception of alternative employment opportunities negatively influenced employees' perception of justice and intention to leave the Nigeria police academy. It is recommended that the present study will help Nigerian public university managers and policymakers retain their valuable human resources in the face of global employment opportunities.

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