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Modeling a Causal Relationship between Organizational Justice and Organizational Commitment with the Mediating Role of Organizational Indifference in Professors of Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences

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Abstract

Background & Objective: Today, organizations need employees who are committed to organizational goals, avoid any form of indifference toward the organization, and extend efforts to realize these goals in order to survive. The present study aimed to evaluate the mediating role of organizational indifference in the relationship between organizational justice and organizational commitment in professors of Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences.

Materials and Methods: This descriptive-correlational study was performed on all professors in Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences (n=235) in 2017. In total, 147 subjects were selected based on the Morgan table. Data were collected using the organizational justice scale is Niehoff and Moorman, organizational commitment questionnaire by Allen and Meyer, and organizational indifference questionnaire by Danaeifard et al. Moreover, data analysis was performed in SPSS version 21 using descriptive (mean and standard deviation) and inferential (Pearson's correlation coefficient and Kolmogorov–Smirnov test) statistics. Furthermore, the structural equation method (SEM) was applied in LISREL software.

Results: In this study, organizational justice had a direct and positive effect on organizational commitment, whereas organizational indifference had a direct and negative impact on organizational commitment. Moreover, organizational justice had a direct and negative effect on organizational indifference while organizational commitment had an indirect significant impact on organizational commitment through organizational indifference.

Conclusion: Given the fact that organizational commitment and organizational indifference are important variables related to professors' organizational commitment, it is suggested that the two variables be considered by university managers.

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Introduction

Organizational indifference is a common problem and an important issue in most organizations and societies. This concept has hidden costs and results in improper productivity of the organization despite having sufficient facilities and workforce (1). In today's world, organizational indifference is the characteristic of individuals who have boring jobs and believe that there is no hope for their occupational progress (2). In general, organizational indifference is a state in which the occurrence or non-occurrence of peripheral events and particularly the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of organizational goals (success or failure of the organization) do not differ to one member or group of members (3). Organizational indifference is the crisis of silence, slow collapse of the organization, and continuous destruction (4). This issue has negative consequences such as avoidance of work, indifference to saving organizational resources, ignoring the creativity and innovation of employees, irresponsibility of employees in times of problems, reducing employee motivation, and salary-oriented activities (5).

In a research, Danaeifard *et al.* conceptualized organizational indifference in five dimensions of indifference to manager, organization, co-workers, clients, and work (6). In fact, employees become indifferent about the organization's

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success and only work for their salary and make efforts as long as they are not fired from the organization (7). Given the importance and negative consequences of organizational indifference, it seems crucial to evaluate barriers and destructive phenomena (e.g., organizational indifference), which cause psychological breakdown between the organization and employees (8). One of the factors affecting employees' organizational indifference is their perception of organizational justice (9). Coskun and Isan (10) describe organizational justice as people's perception of the fairness of the organization's treatment of employees and their behavioral responses to such perceptions. Organizational research often examines three forms of organizational justice, namely distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactive justice (9). The primary research on organizational justice focused on distributive justice.

Distributive justice is defined as the fairness in distributing results and outcomes among employees of the organization (12, 13). Procedural justice refers to processes through which the organizations decide about the allocation and distribution of resources. Moreover, interactive justice involves the managers' behaviors toward employees, such as level of honesty, attention, sensitivity, and respect toward employees (14). On the other hand, organizational indifference can have negative consequences such as decreased organizational commitment of employees (9). Today, organizational commitment is one of the most important job attitudes in the organization and includes factors such as motivation and productivity of the organization since achieving the goals and productivity of organizations extremely depends on the loyalty and commitment of employees (14). Organizational commitment is defined as the level of interest, attachment, and loyalty of employees to the organization and their desire to stay in the organization (15). According to Wagner and Helen Beck, organizational commitment is the real power and ability to make employees feel committed to and represent the organization (16).

In addition, Allen and Meyer introduce three dimensions for organizational commitment; emotional commitment involves employees' psychological and emotional dependence on the organization in a way that people define themselves with the organization. Continuous commitment refers to the inner desire to stay in the organization, which in turn increases awareness of the cost of leaving the organization. Moreover, normative commitment refers to the beliefs and values of individuals regarding the desirability of staying in the organization (17). A committed person relies on the organization, participates in its affairs, and enjoys being its member. Coskun and Isan pointed out the relationship between organizational justice and organizational commitment (10). In addition, Viris and Gaverlik reported an association between organizational justice and organizational commitment (18). In a research, Mohammadi, Hasani, and Aghlmand mentioned the correlation between organizational justice and organizational commitment (19). In another research, Sokhanvar, Hasanpour, Haji Hashemi and Kakmam (2016) pointed out the relationship between organizational justice and organizational indifference (9). In a study by Mola Abbasi, Rezaeimanesh, and Salehi Sadeghiani (2013) mentioned a reverse association between organizational commitment and organizational indifference (20). Esfahani et al. found a reverse, significant relationship between organizational justice and organizational indifference (1). Yazicioğlu İ and Topaloğlu reported a positive, significant correlation between organizational justice and organizational commitment (21).

Since indifference leads to an organization's chronic mental and physical retardation, it is crucial to identify factors affecting this issue and its negative consequences to prevent organizational indifference in human resources. On the other hand, university professors are an important part of human resources owing to their role in universities and services provided to students. According to the studies, this phenomenon has been overlooked in universities. Therefore, this study aimed to evaluate the

mediating role of organizational indifference in the relationship between organizational justice and organizational commitment among professors of Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences.

Materials and Methods

This descriptive, correlational study was performed on all professors of Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences during 2016-2017. In total, 146 individuals were selected based on the Morgan table. However, 160 questionnaires were distributed to increase the accuracy and generalization of the data. In the end, 147 questionnaires were completed and analyzed. The participants were selected by convenience sampling, and data related to organizational justice were collected using the organizational justice scale is Niehoff and Moorman (19), the content validity of which was confirmed by professors of the field. In addition, the reliability of the instrument was confirmed at the Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 in a study by Soltan Hosseini *et al.* (22). The questionnaire encompasses three components of distributive justice (items 1-5), procedural justice (items 6-11), and interactive justice (items 12-20). The questionnaire's items were scored based on a five-point Likert scale. On the other hand, data related to organizational commitment was collected applying the Allen and Meyer's organizational commitment questionnaire (15), which comprises of 24 items and three dimensions of psychological commitment (items 1-8), rational commitment (items 9-16), and normative commitment (items 17-24). The items of the questionnaire were scored based on a five-point Likert scale from completely disagree (one score) to completely agree (five scores). The instrument's content validity was approved by professors and its reliability was confirmed by Rezaeian and Gashtegar at the Cronbach's alpha of 0.85 (23).

Data related to organizational indifference was collected using a questionnaire by Danaeifard *et al.* Encompassing 33 items, the instrument evaluates indifference in five dimensions of indifferent to manager (1-10), organization (11-16), clients (17-22), co-workers (23-26), and the job (27-33). The items are scored based on a five-point Likert scale from completely disagree (one score) to completely agree (five scores). Content validity was confirmed based on the opinions of experts and the instrument's reliability was reported at 0.91 (24). Data analysis was performed in SPSS version 21 using descriptive (frequency, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential (Pearson's correlation, skewness, kurtosis, and Kolmogorov-Smirnov test). In addition, structural equation modeling (SEM) was applied in LISREL software. To measure the impact coefficients and relationships between variables, LISREL software version 8.8 was used. Moreover, impact factor and relations between variables were assessed using LISREL version 8.8. It is worth noting that the research was approved by the ethics committee of the university (IR.MUK.REC.1395/402). Moreover, consent was obtained from the professors prior to the research.

Results

This study was performed on 147 professors at Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences with a mean age of 41.32±8.03 years. In terms of gender, 92 participants (61.7%) were male and 57 were female (38.3%). Regarding the level of education, 58 (38.9%) participants had a PhD, whereas 26 (17.4%) and 65 (43.6%) had a subspecialty degree and an MSc, respectively. The mean work experience of the subjects was 13.00±9.02 (Table 1).

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Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of variables and their components

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Organizational justice	3.27	0.67
Distributive justice	3.52	0.84
Procedural justice	3.14	0.65
Interactive justice	2.41	0.70
Organizational indifference	2.12	0.52
Indifferent to manager	2.24	0.59
Indifferent to organization	2.17	0.67
Indifferent to clients	1.95	0.61
Indifferent to co-workers	2.05	0.62
Indifferent to job	2.10	0.63
Organizational commitment	3.32	0.47
Psychological commitment	3.31	0.57
Rational commitment	3.34	0.54
Normative commitment	3.32	0.52

Normal distribution of the data was assessed based on skewness, kurtosis, KMO test, and Bartlett's test of sphericity. In the end, the results confirmed the normality of the data at skewness and kurtosis variables in the range of -2 and +2. Moreover, the KMO test was reported to be 0.89, 0.812, and 0.87 for the psychological capital questionnaire, self-efficacy change questionnaire, and commitment to change questionnaire, respectively. Th is index is in the range of 0-1, and the closer the value of this index is to one, the more appropriate the sample size data are for factor analysis.

In this research, Bartlett's test of sphericity was applied to evaluate the correlation matrix. The results of the test were below 0.05 for all three questionnaires, thereby rejecting the assumption of the unit correlation matrix and approving the normality of the variables. According to Table 2, there was a significant correlation between organizational justice and organizational indifference (r=-0.48, P≤0.01), organizational indifference, and organizational commitment (r=-0.39, P≤0.01), and organizational justice and organizational commitment (r=0.41, P≤0.01).

Table 2: Pearson correlation coefficient between research variable

1. Organizational justice	1	2	3
2. Organizational indifference	-0.48**	1	1
3. Organizational commitment	0.41**	-0.39**	1

**p<0.01, *p<0.05

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In addition, the correlation between the variables, the standard coefficients, and the t coefficient extracted from the LISREL were presented and interpreted. According to Table 3, the direct effect of organizational justice on organizational commitment (β=0.35, t=2.25), the direct effect of organizational indifference on organizational commitment (β=-0.45, t=-2.71), and the direct effect of organizational justice on organizational indifference (β=0.33, t=-2.00) were significant.

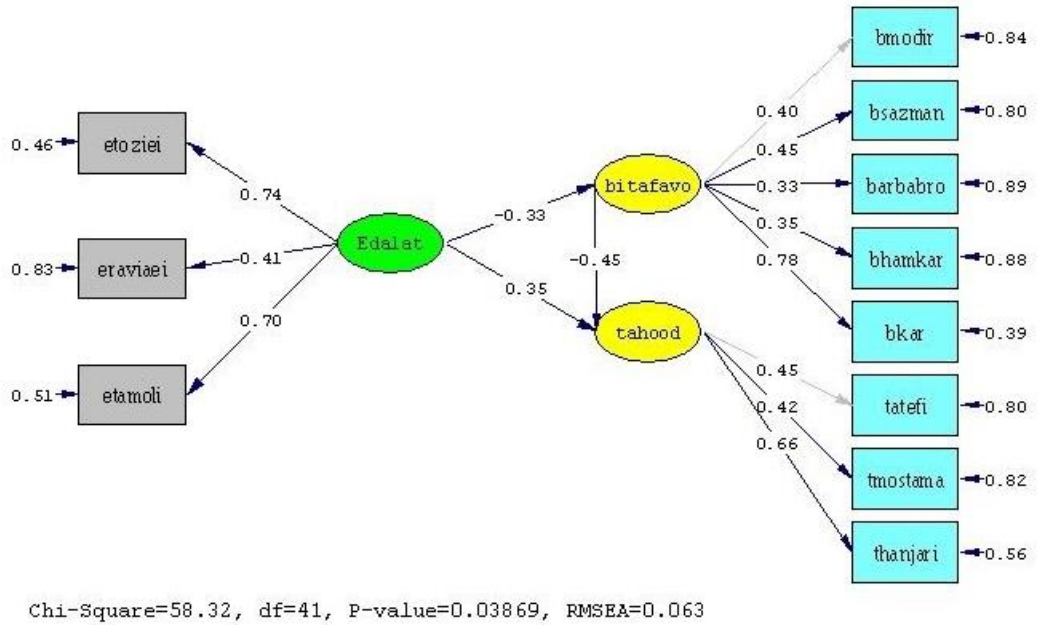

Figure 1. Standard estimation coefficients of relationships between variables

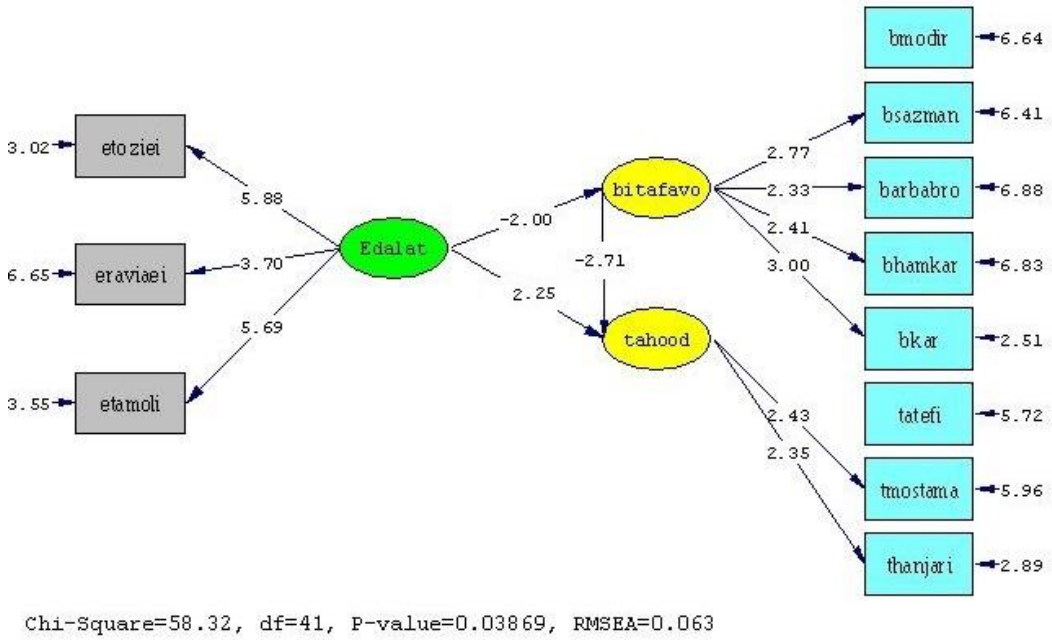

Figure 2. Significant t-coefficients between variables

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Table 3: Table of standard coefficients and significance level

Path		Direct effect	Indirect effect	T
From	T0			
Organizational justice	Organizational commitment	0.35	0.14	2.25
Organizational indifference	Organizational commitment	-0.45	-	-02.71
Organizational justice	Organizational indifference	-0.33	-	-02.00

Table 4: Summary of statistical indicators

X2	DF	X2/DF	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	CFI	NFI
58.32	41	1.42	0.06	0.93	0.92	0.92	0.95

Furthermore, the indirect impact factor (product of multiplying the direct effect of organizational justice on organizational indifference into the direct effect of organizational indifference on organizational commitment) was calculated to evaluate the indirect effect of organizational justice on organizational commitment with the mediating role of organizational indifference. According to the results, the indirect impact factor of organizational justice on organizational commitment was estimated at 0.14, which showed the significant mediating role of organizational indifference in the relationship between organizational justice and organizational commitment. In addition, RMSEA (the root mean square error of approximation), CFI (comparative fit index), GFI (goodness of fit), AGFI (adjusted GFI), NFI (normed fit index) and X2/df (Chi-square with degree of freedom) were estimated at 0.06, 0.94, 0.93, 0.92, 0.95 and 1.42, respectively, thereby confirming the good fit and suitability of the model.

Discussion

The present study aimed to model the relationship between organizational justice, organizational indifference, and organizational commitment of professors at Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences. In the descriptive section, the mean and standard deviation of organizational justice, organizational indifference, and organizational commitment were reported to be 66.14±26.50, 71.96±18.85, and 79.90±11.72, respectively. The results also confirmed the good fit of the conceptual model and the negative, significant direct effect of organizational justice on organizational indifference. In other words, a high perception of organizational justice decreased organizational indifference. In this regard, our findings are in line with the results obtained by Esfahani et al. (1), Aref Hasan, Sokhanvar, Hasanpour, Haji Hashemi and Kakmam (9), Mola Abbasi, Rezaei Manesh, and Salehi Sadeghiani (20) in terms of the negative, significant correlation between organizational justice and organizational indifference (23).

Organizational indifference is a state in which the occurrence or non-occurrence of peripheral events and particularly the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of organizational goals (success or failure of the organization) do not differ to one member or group of members (3). In this case, the employees of the organization believe that the organization and its goals are not very important and prefer their own interests over organizational interests (5). In addition, they have a sense of indifference to the organization, responsibilities, and clients. On the other hand, organizational justice is described as the perception of individuals about the fairness of the organization's treatment of employees and their behavioral reactions (8). This type of perception determines the person's attitude toward job challenges and responsibilities and create a positive attitude in these individuals

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toward the organization, responsibilities, and supervisors. As such, perceiving justice or injustice by the employees of an organization can lay the foundation for responsibilities and indifference toward responsibilities (15). In other words, a person who perceives justice in an organization's behaviors has a more positive attitude toward friends and less experience indifference. Therefore, given the role of organizational justice in the decrease of organizational indifference, it is suggested that attempts be made by university managers to prevent organizational indifference by providing justice in the organization.

According to the results of the present study, organizational justice had a direct, positive, and significant effect on organizational commitment. In other words, perceived organizational justice increase organizational commitment in professors, which is consistent with the results obtained by Coskun and Isan (10), Viris and Gaverlik (18), Mohammadi, Hasani, and Aghlmand (19), Abdollahi *et al.* (14), and Yazicioğlu İ and Topaloğlu (18). The results were indicative of the positive effect of organizational justice on organizational commitment. Organizational justice is conceptualized in three dimensions of distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactive justice (25). Distributive justice refers to the observance of fairness and equality in receipts such as wages and salaries. The perception of justice and equality with other colleagues can increase the level of organizational commitment of university professors towards the university. In addition, interactive justice is understanding fairness in the boss's treatment of the individual, compared to colleagues. On the other hand, observance of fairness in procedures and regulations make work for the organization and the university enjoyable for professors and increase their commitment.

In fact, professors and staff of universities compare themselves with their colleagues in work areas, and their commitment to their job and university increases in case of perceiving fairness in their various relationships in the university. These results are based on Adams' theory of equality, social exchange, and contractual relations. According to this theory, when professors consider their earnings to be fair against what they give to the organization, organizational justice is established and they feel more satisfied and committed to the organization (1). In addition, organizational indifference had a negative, significant effect on organizational commitment, meaning that organizational indifference decreases organizational commitment in professors. In this respect, our findings are in accordance with the results obtained by Mola Abbasi, Rezaimanesh, and Salehi Sadeghiani (20), and Latifian *et al.* (13). In conditions of indifference, the person is indifferent to the occurrence or non-occurrence of environmental phenomena and the realization of organizational goals does not do the job accurately and quickly, does not attempt to provide suggestions and ideas to improve working conditions in the organization, is reluctant to face the manager and avoids accepting responsibility.

The consequences of organizational indifference include carelessness, wasting time at work, mental stagnation, and hatred toward the organization. If such a person stays in the organization due to job security, they do not belong to it or (if possible) leaves the organization. Ultimately, the transfer of indifference to other colleagues and staff creates serious problems for the organization (5). After recognizing all issues emerging due to organizational indifference, it is logical to select experienced managers who motivate the staff, allocate responsibilities to employees based on their expertise, and do not discriminate between employees. In addition, organizations can reduce or eliminate indifference by recruiting dynamic and creative employees, asking their opinions about the organization's affairs, and holding specialized courses for these individuals. This will lead to the attachment of employees to work and the organization and proper performance of organizational commitment by the staff (21). Organizational commitment is a type of attitude of employees and professors towards the organization that shows the level of interest, attachment, and loyalty of

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these individuals towards the organization and their desire to stay in the organization.

On the other hand, organizational indifference is when the occurrence or non-occurrence of phenomena and specifically the realization and non-realization of organizational goals does not differ for a member or a group of members. In this state, employees or faculty believe that the organization and its goals do not matter much, prefer their own interests to organizational interests and are indifferent to the organization, the task, and the client, and do not feel responsible. Those employees and professors who are indifferent to the organization and its goals are constantly seeking excuses to delay their tasks and responsibilities. As such, indifferent people have a lower level of organizational commitment toward the organization and occupational responsibilities. Furthermore, the results of data analysis in examining the indirect effect of organizational justice on organizational commitment through organizational indifference can also be justified and explained according to the direct effects of organizational justice and organizational indifference on organizational commitment. In other words, organizational justice increased organizational commitment by decreasing organizational indifference.

Conclusion

According to the results of the present study, organizational justice had a direct, negative impact on organizational indifference. On the other hand, organizational indifference had a negative, direct effect on organizational commitment, decreasing it in professors. Meanwhile, organizational justice had a positive, direct impact on organizational commitment, which means that its provision in the organization increases commitment in employees. The results were indicative of the indirect, significant impact of organizational justice on organizational commitment with the mediating role of organizational injustice.

According to the results of this study, it is suggested that attention be paid to all aspects of organizational justice by university administrators in dealing with employees. In addition, it is recommended that measures be taken to reduce organizational indifference by expanding and promoting justice in the organization. In addition, it is suggested that attempts be made to decrease organizational indifference, which should be regarded as a negative phenomenon in the organization. By doing so, we can increase professors' commitment to the university and prevent indifference in these individuals.

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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