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Organizational justice and work outcomes in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate the main and interaction effects of organizational justice components as they pertain to job performance and satisfaction in an Eastern region.

Design/methodology/approach – Data were gathered utilizing a sample of 402 employee-manager dyads working for various institutions of higher education in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Hierarchical regression analyses and relative weight analysis were used to test the research hypotheses.

Findings – The results indicated that perceived distributive, procedural, and interactional justice all contribute to employee job satisfaction and job performance, and that among the justice components, interactional justice was more strongly related to job satisfaction and job performance. The results also showed that interactional justice interacts with distributive justice to affect job performance.

Research limitations/implications – Although data were gathered from two sources, all data were collected at a single point in time, which may raise a concern about common method variance.

Practical implications – Managers who try to enhance employees' perceptions of organizational justice are advised to constantly develop and evaluate the way they treat their employees, especially in terms of social aspects such as dignity, support, and respect.

Originality/value – This study is the first work in the Kurdistan Region or Iraq as a whole that investigates organizational justice as it pertains to work outcomes.

Keywords Job performance, Job satisfaction, Organizational justice, Iraq, Kurdistan

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Studies in human resource management and organizational behavior have focused considerable attention on the concept of organizational justice due to its relationship with several work-related outcomes, including job performance, commitment, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), job satisfaction, perceived organizational support, and turnover (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Hao *et al.*, 2016; Wei and Lee, 2015). Although the link between components of organizational justice perceptions (distributive, procedural, and interactional justice) and work-related outcomes has been researched by numerous empirical works in western countries (Chien *et al.*, 2010; Garcia-Izquierdo *et al.*, 2012), few empirical studies have looked at organizational justice related to work outcomes in non-western countries, especially in the Middle East (Suliman and Kathairi, 2013). Crucial unanswered questions remain, such as whether the results of studies from western countries can be generalized to eastern countries. Pertinent studies exist indicating that justice influences differ across cultural and national settings (Li and Cropanzano, 2009; Schilpzand *et al.*, 2013). Recently, organizational scholars have suggested that the necessity to extend justice theories to different cultures beyond the boundaries of western countries, and prove their universality and generalizability (Fischer, 2013; Shao *et al.*, 2013). This research addresses the gap between western and eastern settings by conducting an empirical study regarding organizational justice related to two important work outcomes, job satisfaction and job performance, in the context of higher education institutions in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).

Kurdistan is a semi-autonomous region located in the North of Iraq, comprised of the four governorates of Erbil, Slemani, Duhok, and Halabja with a population of over 5.5 million people, mainly comprised of people of Kurdish ethnicity with their own culture and language. The KRI obtained its liberty from the dictatorship regime of Saddam Hussein in 1992. The ruling Kurdistan Regional Government is responsible for regional affairs including security and borders. After the fall of the former regime in 2003, the KRI, in comparison with other parts of Iraq, was able to maintain the stability and security of the region. This stability and peaceful condition in the region positively influenced every aspect of life, and played an important role in boosting its economy, including attracting foreign investors, rebuilding infrastructure, building international airports, and promoting relations with international community members. An innovative gas and oil policy created a new development opportunity by bringing a number of international energy companies in to the KRI. Numerous local issues associated with government transparency and education have been addressed. For example, from the fall of the former regime in 2003-2016, the number of schools has increased from 3,200 to 6,000, boys and girls share equal school opportunities, and the illiteracy rate has declined from 47 to 16 percent.

Such changes in economic, political, and social circumstances are likely to affect organizations in the form of seeking freedom and justice (Beugr, 2002). Hence, changes in economic, political, and social situations certainly impact organizational practices. Local and foreign managers need to be aware of these trends and provide suitable responses, as the work behavior in organizations is shaped by the social environment in which they work. Taking into account these new advances in the KRI, conducting empirical and conceptual research on the perceptions of organizational justice is needed.

Acquiring useful information and having an awareness of the Kurdistan culture may have implications for starting and managing businesses in the area. This study discusses cultural characteristics of Kurdistan in light of two key culture dimensions defined by Hofstede (1980), including individualism/collectivism and power distance. A number of previous studies on justice focused on Hofstede's culture dimensions, especially in cross-cultural studies between eastern and western countries (Fischer, 2013; Li and Cropanzano, 2009). Hofstede labeled Iraq a collectivist culture as the people of Iraq perform better using team work and focus on interpersonal harmony. As Islam is the religion of an overwhelming majority of people in the KRI, the nature of the collectivist culture of Iraq can be attributed to the belief that the Muslim community is a brotherhood, providing the foundation of ethical and social obligations of Muslims. In addition, the existence of social networks created by extended and large families may determine the nature of collectivism. Personal relationships are the operational base among Iraqi individuals, rather than a foundation of impersonal institutions or agreements (Yeganeh and Su, 2007). In a business context, Iraqi business people are most concerned about founding and developing close friendships and trust building with their counterparts (Bradley et al., 2010). Hofstede's findings showed that Iraqi people scored high on the power distance dimension, which means that Iraqis are aware and tolerant of the fact that power is distributed unequally in organizations. The nature of high power distance encourages a situation in which leaders have maximum authority and power (Taylor, 2003). Since the KRI is in the Northern part of Iraq, these results will likely apply.

Perceptions of justice may influence several work-related outcomes. Due to different national cultures, such as western and eastern cultures, the influence likely varies across cultures, with individuals from various countries assessing different components of organizational justice differently (Li and Cropanzano, 2009). Prior cross-cultural studies have concentrated on different culture features in preference for specific reward allocation or distributive justice rules, such as equity and equality, and various procedural principles such as voice and process control. A number of scholars demonstrated that culture dimensions such as individualism/collectivism and power distance are associated with variations in the preference for such rules and principles (Fischer, 2008, 2013). For instance, while individualists

prefer the equity rule for allocating rewards, the main goal of which is performance and equitable distribution of outcomes based on relative contributions of each member to the organization (Giacobbe-Miller *et al.*, 2003). The equity preference of individualists for distributing rewards is mainly attributed to a concern with achievement of personal goals, task achievement, and enhancing productivity (Leung, 1988). Collectivists prefer the equality rule, the main goal of which is interpersonal harmony among organization members and equal distribution of outcomes (Giacobbe-Miller *et al.*, 2003). The equality preference of collectivists is generally attributed to a concern with keeping interpersonal harmony among organization members (Leung, 1988). The reaction of collectivistic employees, such as those in China, has a weaker relationship with distributive justice in terms of equity rule because their concentration is more likely on maintaining interpersonal harmony rather than achieving personal goals. In contrast, individualists, such as in North America, are more reactive to distributive injustice in terms of equity, as it is seen to cause hindrance to achievement of personal goals (Li and Cropanzano 2009). In addition, values of collectivistic culture influence perceptions of interactional justice. In the context of performance appraisal, Tata *et al.* (2003) investigated the effect of social sensitivity, and their results indicated that social sensitivity has a weaker influence on overall justice in individualistic USA than in collectivistic China. In collectivistic cultures, apology, respect, and explanation are considered more positively, while in individualistic cultures, compensation strategies for treating service failure incidents are considered more positively (Mattila and Patterson, 2004). All the previous results are likely attributable to the crucial nature of conflict avoidance, social status, and interpersonal harmony, which together indicate that people place higher importance on interpersonal treatment in collectivistic cultures. Furthermore, perceptions of organizational justice are affected by cultural values of power distance, particularly in accordance with procedural justice. People with low power distance tolerance probably experience greater resentment and discontent toward their managers, and respond more strongly to procedural injustice, which refers to the amount of voice, control, or influence individuals have in decisions made regarding outcome or reward distribution (Leventhal, 1980). On the other hand, individuals in high power distance cultures are likely to accept decisions made by authority figures (Chen and Aryee, 2007; Kirkman *et al.*, 2009). As a result, procedural injustice, such as having no voice or control over decisions made about distributing outcomes, is less likely to irritate them and consequently, they react less negatively to authority figures.

In the organizational justice literature, three different models – main effect, two-way interaction, and three-way interaction – have been used to test the effects of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice on a variety of work-related outcomes. The purpose of this study is to test these three alternative models in the context of the KRI, and as this study simultaneously studies the influences of all three justice components, the relative importance of each component can be determined. No research in the field of organizational justice has been done in the KRI or Iraq as a whole. Therefore, testing justice theories in the unique cultural context of the East will provide some new insight on theories of justice that have been mainly examined and developed in western contexts. This work will help local and foreign managers or decision makers throughout the KRI or Iraq to better realize the connections among justice, job satisfaction, and employee job performance, which may raise organizational performance and productivity (Clarke, 2006). Managers may integrate these factors into their procedures for managing human resources successfully.

Theoretical background and hypotheses
Organizational justice perceptions
Organizational justice explains how groups or individuals perceive the fairness of treatment from their organizations, and how such perceptions affect their behavioral outcomes (Farndale *et al.*, 2011). In the existing organizational literature, three

components – distributive, procedural, and interactional justice – have been used to conceptualize justice (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001).

Distributive justice refers to employees' perceived justice concerning the rewards and outcomes they get from an organization (Moliner *et al.*, 2008). Adams (1965) laid the foundation for majority studies on distributive justice with the theory of equity. Adam's work demonstrated that employees would like to receive rewards and outcomes that correspond to the perceived degree of their effort and contribution as they feel the outcomes and rewards received are equal and just. Procedural justice is equally as essential as distributive justice in the justice concept; distribution of rewards and outcomes is not the only concept employees use to define justice, but they also consider the policies and processes of determining those outcomes (Leventhal, 1980). Employees perceive justice when they have a chance to have input, voice, or control over the procedures and policies that lead to outcome decisions (Barsky and Kaplan, 2007). Bies and Moag (1986) expanded the notion of procedural justice when they proposed that an employee's perceived justice is not only influenced by procedures, but also by the personal treatment that an employee receives throughout the process of determining a specific outcome. This concept is called interactional justice. Employees' perceptions of interactional fairness during procedures, and decisions made about outcomes are impacted by whether supervisors and organizational representatives treat employees with dignity and respect, and whether employees receive enough information concerning decisions made about their outcomes (Jordan *et al.*, 2007).

Perceptions of organizational justice and work outcomes

Several scholars have proposed that job performance and job satisfaction are two important outcomes related to justice perceptions (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Colquitt *et al.*, 2001; Cropanzana *et al.*, 2007; Zapata-Phelan *et al.*, 2009). This study uses the term job performance to refer to the role-prescribed behavior as it is identified in formal job descriptions (Williams and Anderson, 1991). French (1982) referred to job satisfaction as an effective reaction and response to a broad array of an individual's work conditions or aspects, including supervision, pay, the work itself, and working conditions.

In connection with the influence of perceptions of distributive justice on job performance and job satisfaction, Adam's theory of equity provides perhaps the best-developed theoretical framework (Adams, 1965; Colquitt *et al.*, 2001; Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Wei and Lee, 2015). According to equity theory, justice is a result of the proportionality of input/outcome ratio (effort, experience, and work/rewards) of an individual compared to a referent other. When individuals' input/outcome ratio is lower than the input/outcome of comparison targets, they feel resentful and angry and tend to show a greater level of job dissatisfaction. As a consequence, individuals are inclined to restore equity by modifying their contribution with regard to perceptions of distributive injustice, consequently impacting their performance. In other words, if an employee thinks he or she is being fairly treated (equal input/outcome ratios), he or she is more likely to perform better and to feel more satisfied. Otherwise, the employee will likely show dissatisfaction and attempt to restore justice by restricting his or her performance and altering her or his quantity and quality of work (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Latham and Pinder, 2005).

All three components of organizational justice, particularly interactional and procedural justice, have the ability to catalyze social exchange in the workplace (Cropanzana *et al.* 2007), and trusting others is required in order for the social exchange to be reciprocated (Aryee *et al.*, 2002; Blau, 1964). The main concern of organizations and supervisors is to prove their trustworthiness. The social exchange relationship with employees is initiated when organizations or supervisors treat them fairly, and with the passage of time this makes them feel supported, in turn increasing the perceived trustworthiness of the

organizations and supervisors. As supervisors satisfy the individual's perceptions of the organization's duties and make relational contracts, the organization's trustworthiness grows in employees (Aryee *et al.*, 2002). Consequently, this obligates employees to reciprocate with behaviors and attitudes that support the employer or the manager. Employees reciprocate the trustworthiness, which come from their perceptions of fairness, with positive attitudinal and behavioral reactions (Blau, 1964; Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Herington and Weaven, 2009). In the workplace, when employees believe that they are treated fairly in the form of social and psychological needs such as voice, care, respect, and dignity (components of procedural and interactional justice), they likely reciprocate with better job performance and feel more satisfied.

Justice can derive from either an employee's organization or supervisor as an input to the exchange relationship. When organizations make high-quality exchange relationships with their employees through treating them fairly and allow them to have a voice in decisions regarding to their outcomes (fair procedures), employees feel more satisfied and are likely to exert a higher level of effort to obtain a better level of job performance. Conversely, employees are likely to show only adequate job performance and feel dissatisfaction when they think that they are in low-quality exchange relationships. When managers treat employees with care, respect, and dignity (fair interpersonal treatments), employees may consider this treatment as an outcome they receive, and thus, the input/outcome ratio of the employee should be influenced. Because employees receive fair treatment from their managers, they respond with better performance and higher satisfaction. Therefore, job performance and satisfaction should be associated with procedural justice to the extent it is affected by the employees' relationships with their organizations, and associated with interactional justice to the extent it is affected by the employees' relationships with their managers or supervisors (Aryee *et al.*, 2002; Chien *et al.*, 2010; Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Hollensbe *et al.*, 2008; Wei and Lee, 2015).

In the current justice literature, empirical studies have generally found that distributive justice positively contributes to job performance (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Colquitt *et al.*, 2001; Cropanzana *et al.*, 2007; Shan *et al.*, 2015). Several studies have indicated that procedural justice positively and significantly contributes to employee job performance. For instance, some researchers in their meta-analytic reviews and studies concluded that perceived procedural justice positively contributes to employee job performance and that the contribution is moderately strong (Chien *et al.*, 2010; Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Colquitt *et al.*, 2001; Shan *et al.*, 2015; Zapata-Phelan *et al.*, 2009). The most ambiguous association appears to be between perceived interactional justice and job performance. The contribution of interactional justice to job performance remains unclear, and studies concerning the associations between these two variables yielded mixed results. Some researchers indicated that interactional justice was not significantly linked to job performance (Colquitt *et al.*, 2006; Zapata-Phelan *et al.*, 2009), while other studies have identified a significant positive association (Shan *et al.*, 2015; Suliman and Kathairi, 2013).

In accordance with the above-mentioned theoretical explanations and results, this study expects to replicate the results that job performance is affected by perceived distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, suggesting the following hypothesis:

H1. Distributive (a), procedural (b), and interactional justice (c) significantly and positively contribute to job performance.

The findings obtained from the current justice literature suggest that there is a connection between job satisfaction and various organizational justice components, although these studies have concluded that the degree of impact that each organizational justice component has on job satisfaction varies. In particular, the rate of variance, which various components of organizational justice explain in job satisfaction, tends to differ. In their meta-analysis,

Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001) concluded that all the justice components have a similarly high influence on job satisfaction, while Colquitt *et al.* (2001), in their meta-analytic review, stated that compared to distributive and interactional justice, procedural justice is the most crucial prerequisite of job satisfaction. Following these two meta-analyses, a number of researchers explored the relationship between justice components and job satisfaction with differing results. Several empirical studies found that distributive justice explains most of the variances in job satisfaction (Choi, 2011; Colquitt *et al.*, 2001; Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; McFarlin and Sweeney, 1992; Nadiri and Tanova, 2010). These results are contrary to others (Garcia-Izquierdo *et al.*, 2012; Hao *et al.*, 2016; Khan *et al.*, 2015; Lambert, 2003; Lambert *et al.*, 2007), who concluded that procedural justice was a more significant factor in job satisfaction. In contrast, according to a study conducted by Jordan *et al.* (2007), the majority of variance related to job satisfaction can be attributed to interactional justice. In another study, Miao *et al.* (2012) concluded that, in the context of Chinese social structure, distributive justice moderately and positively contributes to job satisfaction, while interactional justice strongly and positively contributes to job satisfaction. Surprisingly, the connection between procedural justice and job satisfaction was not statistically significant.

According to the above-mentioned studies and results, this research anticipates replicating the outcome that all the components of justice will positively contribute to job satisfaction, suggesting the following hypothesis:

H2. Distributive (a), procedural (b), and interactional justice (c) significantly and positively contribute to job satisfaction.

The relative importance of justice components on work outcomes

The majority of studies on the effects of justice on job satisfaction and job performance have been conducted in western countries, in which procedural justice was the most important predictor in relation to job performance (Chien *et al.*, 2010; Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Colquitt *et al.*, 2001; Zapata-Phelan *et al.*, 2009), and either distributive justice or procedural justice showed greater importance in relation to job satisfaction (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Colquitt *et al.*, 2001; Garcia-Izquierdo *et al.*, 2012; Lambert, 2003; Lambert *et al.*, 2007). This calls into question the extent to which the results are generalizable to the collectivist and high power distance cultures of the East, such as the KRI, as scholars have argued that individuals' justice perceptions depend on the values and norms of the local culture (Li and Cropanzano, 2009; Schilpzand *et al.*, 2013).

Due to differences in individualism/collectivism and power distance, the values and norms that prevail in the KRI are different from those of western countries, and justice rules and principles may be interpreted differently (Fischer, 2008, 2013; Giacobbe-Miller *et al.*, 2003; Leung, 1988). Given the cultural differences, the relative importance of components of justice perceptions on the work outcomes in this research may differ from western examples. For example, according to the high power distance nature of the KRI, employees are expected to accept decisions made about their rewards without having any voice or control over procedures (Chen and Aryee, 2007; Kirkman *et al.*, 2009). They may expect very little fairness in the procedures used to reach a decision, and respond less than westerners to procedural injustice. In concurrence with this discussion, Brockner *et al.* (2001) indicated that low power distance cultures such as Germany and the USA, compared to high power distance cultures such as Hong Kong and China, react with lower organizational commitment when they have low levels of voice because low power distance cultures experience low levels of voice as a breach of culture norms. Conversely, as people in high power distance cultures are less negatively affected by lack of voice in the decisions made about their outcomes as making decisions by high formal

powers is normative; the effect of procedural justice on work outcomes may be weak in this study.

In their meta-analysis, Li and Cropanzano (2009) concluded that distributive and procedural justice has a weaker effect on work outcomes among East Asians than among North Americans. They explained this result in terms of culture differences, and stated that because North Americans are individualistic in nature, they concentrate on achievement of personal goals and personal self-concept, preferring equity rule, and strongly respond to unfairness that may restrain the accomplishment of their personal goals. In contrast, because East Asians are collectivistic in nature, they place greater emphasis on collective or relational self-concept, preferring equality rule (Leung, 1988). Li and Cropanzano (2009) found that the association of distributive and procedural justice with work outcomes among North Americans is stronger than among East Asians, suggesting that the influences of interactional justice with organizational members may have different patterns. According to the collectivist culture, employees are inclined to focus on encouraging collective spirit, interpersonal harmony, family atmosphere, relational self-concept, and social norms (Hofstede, 1980). The exchange relationships between employees and their supervisors or organizations are to make long-term social relations, to satisfy the needs of belonging, security, and warmth, and to obtain considerate and respectful treatment. This indicates that the way employees are treated by their supervisors may have a crucial influence on their behaviors. Unfair or disrespectful treatment by their supervisors, that is, interactional injustice, may heighten concern regarding their long-term relationships with supervisors (Miao et al., 2012). As noted earlier, the KRI is a collectivistic culture, where employees are likely to have a stronger desire for receiving support and respectful treatment from their supervisors in the workplace. If so, it seems reasonable to expect that interactional justice will be the most important justice component in relation to work outcomes in the context of the KRI, suggesting the following hypothesis:

H3. Interactional justice has a stronger influence on job performance and job satisfaction than distributive and procedural justice.

Interaction effects
Previously presented evidence suggested that different components of justice have independent effects on work outcomes showing that maintaining distributive, procedural, and interactional justice concurrently is a valuable task. Scholars have discussed that because distributive, procedural, and interactional justice together contribute to justice sense, studying them separately cannot be fully understood without taking into account the interaction effects of these three components (Brockner and Wiesenfeld, 1996; Cropanzano et al., 2005; Skarlicki and Folger, 1997).

In the extant literature, two-way and three-way interactions have been studied among the three components of organizational justice. Several studies have supported the two-way interaction model through which distributive justice interacts with interactional justice, or procedural justice to affect the way employees respond to decisions made about their outcomes (Brockner and Wiesenfeld, 1996). The key point in the two-way interaction model is that when interactional or procedural justice is low, employees respond more strongly to distributive injustice. In other words, the negative impact of distributive injustice is ameliorated or compensated for by either interactional or procedural justice (Brockner and Wiesenfeld, 1996). In contrast, several studies have supported the three-way interaction model through which the three forms of justice interact simultaneously to impact how employees respond to organizational decisions (Skarlicki and Folger, 1997). The key point in the three-way interaction model is that when at least one justice component remains high, the negative consequences of unfair events can be ameliorated to some extent. For instance,

when interactional justice is high, low distributive and low procedural justice have low negative effects (Cropanzana *et al.*, 2007).

Numerous scholars have used Folger's (1986) referent cognition theory (RCT) as a possible theoretical framework for elucidating the interaction effects between justice components (Brockner and Wiesenfeld, 1996; Jiang, 2015; McFarlin and Sweeney, 1992; Skarlicki and Folger, 1997). In the earlier form of RCT, Folger (1986) argued that negative responses and resentment toward an outcome allocation will be maximized if individuals believe the outcomes received would have been better if the decision maker used fairer procedures. RCT anticipates that even when distributive justice is low, resentment and negative reaction will be lowest when individuals perceive the procedures to be fair, as it is hard for individuals to perceive other procedures that could have resulted in better outcomes. Folger (1993) revised RCT beyond formal procedures to include interactional justice, explaining that employees' perceptions of whether they are treated with respect and dignity, and provided with sufficient justification and explanation for a specific outcome, may impact their perception of the outcome's favorability or fairness (Brockner and Wiesenfeld, 1996). When employees are treated in an appropriate manner and provided with justifications and explanations for a specific outcome, they are likely to accept the organization's behavior and conduct as legitimate and may consider the outcome as fair. In contrast, an unfavorable or unfair outcome combined with inadequate explanations and treatment may imply that an individual is not deserving of respect and viewed as an unimportant organization member. Hence, when an organization conducts itself in an inappropriate manner and fails to implement fair procedures, individuals will most likely feel anger and resentment and respond negatively by lowered performance and increased dissatisfaction to unfavorable or unfair outcomes (VanYperen *et al.*, 2000). Consistent with RCT, several scholars have tested two-way interactions among justice components. McFarlin and Sweeney (1992) concluded that distributive and procedural justice has a significant interaction effect on evaluation of supervisor and organizational commitment, and an insignificant interaction effect on pay and job satisfaction. In another study in Hong Kong, Fields *et al.* (2000) found that distributive and procedural justice significantly interacts to affect the employee's intent to stay and their job satisfaction, but the interaction effect was not significant on the evaluation of supervision. Lin *et al.* (2011) concluded that interactional and distributive justice has a significant interaction effect on complaint handling assessments, suggesting the following hypotheses:

H4. There will be a two-way interaction between distributive and procedural justice, such that when procedural justice is high, the relationship between distributive justice and job performance (a) and job satisfaction (b) is not significant.

H5. There will be a two-way interaction between distributive and interactional justice, such that when interactional justice is high, the relationship between distributive justice and job performance (a) and job satisfaction (b) is not significant.

Interactional and procedural justice can compensate for each other (Skarlicki and Folger, 1997). For example, an employee will respond negatively by lowered performance and increased dissatisfaction to unfair or unfavorable outcomes, such as an unfair reward allocation, when organizational representatives interact in unfair ways, such as by being disrespectful or unkind, and procedures that result in unfavorable outcome are seen as unjust by the employee, such as having no voice in the decision. Conversely, unfair procedures may be compensated for when organizational representatives treat employees with respect and dignity and consider the employees' needs, leading to employees being more likely to react positively to an unfavorable or unfair outcome. Consistent with this reasoning, Skarlicki and Folger (1997) concluded a significant three-way interaction between the three components of organizational justice. They found that high interactional

justice or procedural justice can lessen the negative effect of low distributive justice with either low procedural justice or low interactional justice, suggesting the following hypothesis:

H6. There will be a three-way interaction among distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, such that when at least one of interactional justice or procedural justice is high, the relationship between distributive justice and job performance (a) and job satisfaction (b) is not significant.

Methods

Participants and procedures

The sample for the current work was drawn from administrative employees of ten large public higher education institutions in the KRI. Administrative employees of public higher education institutions are an ideal sample to test this study's hypotheses as this study evaluates the theory of justice in a context that represents the culture of the KRI. Administrative employees of public educational institutions are mainly people of the KRI, given that employees can represent the culture of the region. Approximately 17,615 administrative employees work for the ten institutions. Prior to distributing the questionnaires, the first researcher obtained formal permission from the Ministry of Higher Education and each institution's management. The researcher personally met all of the participants, in separate employees and their managers. The researcher asked employees and managers if they volunteered to participate in the study, and assured them their anonymity would remain intact; the confidentiality of their responses was also assured via written and verbal agreements. Participants were told that all data were to be utilized for academic purposes only. Primary data were gathered from two different sources to minimize concerns regarding common method bias. Two questionnaires were developed for managers and employees. The managers responded to questions about their employees' job performance. The employees responded to questions about their justice perceptions and job satisfaction. To match the responses of each employee with their immediate manager's appraisals, the researcher coded each questionnaire with an identification number. For the primary data collection, 550 questionnaires were randomly distributed to employees and managers volunteering for the study. Each questionnaire was given to and gathered from the participants by the first researcher directly, and completed questionnaires were matched.

Of the 550 questionnaires distributed, 443 questionnaires (comprising 443 employee-manager dyads) were returned. This high response rate of 80.5 percent may be due to distributing the questionnaires in person. Of the returned questionnaires, 41 were returned incomplete, and excluded, resulting in 402 employee-manager dyads for analysis; these 402 employees were managed by 59 immediate managers. Each manager evaluated at least four employees, with managed employees ranging from 4 to 12. The mean age of the employees was 33.73 years (SD = 7.199), 54.9 percent of the employees were male, and the marriage rate for all employees was 60.4 percent. Most of the employees (66.9 percent) held at least a bachelor's degree, a mean for organizational tenure of 8.16 years (SD = 6.494), and a mean tenure for working in the higher education sector of 10.40 years (SD = 6.972). The mean age for managers was 42.5 years. The majority of the managers (72.8 percent) were male, and most managers (81.3 percent) held at least master's degree.

Measures

As the measurement items were obtained in English, it was necessary to translate them into Kurdish. The translation was performed in three steps as follows: the English text of each item was translated into Kurdish; the Kurdish text was translated into English by a different translator; and the final Kurdish version was composed based on a comparison

of the translated English version with the original English version. All the ;measurements were evaluated on a five-point Likert-type scale (from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree").

Perceptions of organizational justice

Employees assessed their perception of three organizational justice components in 20 items, adapted from Niehoff and Moorman (1993). Of the 20 items, five items measured distributive justice, such as "I think that my level of pay is fair"; six items measured procedural justice, such as "Employees are allowed to challenge or appeal job decisions made by their managers"; and nine items measured interactional justice, such as "When decisions are made about my job, the manager treats me with respect and dignity." The Cronbach's α values were 0.78, 0.87, and 0.94, respectively.

Job satisfaction

A seven-item standard questionnaire was used to evaluate overall job satisfaction, adapted from the Fernandes and Awamleh's (2006) scale. Employees were asked about their perceptions of overall job satisfaction, such as "In general, I am satisfied with this job." The Cronbach's α value was 0.89.

Job performance

The employees' immediate managers assessed the job performance of their employees. Seven items were used to assess job performance, adapted from the Williams and Anderson's (1991) scale for assessing employee in-role behaviors, such as "This employee adequately completes his/her assigned duties." Of the seven items, two items were negatively worded and were reverse-coded when data were analyzed. The Cronbach's α value was 0.93.

Control variables

This study used several control variables in statistical analyses due to their potential effects on work outcomes, including age, gender, marital status, educational level, total organizational tenure, and tenure in the higher education sector.

Analysis

Although data were gathered from two different sources (employees and their immediate managers), all data were collected at a single point in time, which may raise a concern regarding common method variance (CMV). Therefore, the Harman's (1967) one factor test was run, as proposed by Podsakoff *et al.* (2003). To test the potential of CMV, all the items used to measure variables of this study were entered into an unrotated principal component factor analysis, yielding a five-factor solution, which together accounted for 66.2 percent of the total variance. The first factor only accounted for 18.08 percent of the total variance and no single factor explained the majority of the total variance, proving that CMV was not a major problem. The values of variance inflation factor in all regression analyses ranged from 1.00 to 3.83, which is below the suggested cut-off threshold of 10 (Hair *et al.*, 1998), proving that multicollinearity does not exist in this study.

Exploratory factor analyses were conducted on the survey instruments to evaluate their validity and to make sure that each group of items loads uniquely and significantly on the suitable component (Hair *et al.*, 1998). The 27 self-rating items dealing with the perceptions of organizational justice and job satisfaction were subjected, using varimax rotation, to a principal component analysis (PCA). As shown in Table I, the PCA findings showed the existence of four components with eigenvalues > 1. The four components, collectively, explain 64.4 percent of the total variance. The first component, interactional justice,

Items	Components				Percentage of variance
	1	2	3	4	
Distributive justice 1				0.797	10.88
Distributive justice 2				0.620	
Distributive justice 3				0.751	
Distributive justice 4				0.670	
Distributive justice 5				0.765	
Procedural justice 1			0.643		14.09
Procedural justice 2			0.799		
Procedural justice 3			0.826		
Procedural justice 4			0.727		
Procedural justice 5			0.548		
Procedural justice 6			0.785		
Interactional justice 1	0.707				22.37
Interactional justice 2	0.828				
Interactional justice 3	0.777				
Interactional justice 4	0.787				
Interactional justice 5	0.836				
Interactional justice 6	0.720				
Interactional justice 7	0.741				
Interactional justice 8	0.748				
Interactional justice 9	0.723				
Job satisfaction 1		0.713			17.04
Job satisfaction 2		0.832			
Job satisfaction 3		0.819			
Job satisfaction 4		0.752			
Job satisfaction 5		0.698			
Job satisfaction 6		0.802			
Job satisfaction 7		0.750			

Table I.
Factor loadings of self-rating items

contained nine items accounting for 22.37 percent of the total variance. The second component, job satisfaction, contained seven items accounting for 17.04 percent of the total variance. The third component, procedural justice, contained six items accounting for 14.09 percent of the total variance. The fourth component, distributive justice, contained five items accounting for 10.88 percent of the total variance.

The seven manager rating items of job performance were subjected to a PCA using varimax rotation. Table II indicates that one component yielded an eigenvalue exceeding the recommended value of 1. The component contained seven job performance items, and accounted for 71.59 percent of the total variance. The components indicated a number of strong loadings ranging from 0.55 to 0.89. The highest cross-loading was 3.38, showing no questionable loadings.

Reliability analyses were conducted utilizing Cronbach's α to check the internal consistency of items representing each component. The findings indicate

Items	Component 1	Percentage of variance
Job performance 1	0.785	71.59
Job performance 2	0.896	
Job performance 3	0.879	
Job performance 4	0.880	
Job performance 5	0.887	
Job performance 6	0.842	
Job performance 7	0.741	

Table II.
Factor loadings of manager rating items

highly reliable and internally consistent items that represent each component, surpassing the suggested value of 0.7 (Price, 1997). All analyses were performed using IBM SPSS version 21.

Results

Table III shows the standard deviations, means, and the findings of Pearson correlation coefficients concerning the correlation among variables involved. α reliabilities are reported in parentheses.

To further examine hypotheses, two separate four-step hierarchical regression analyses were conducted for job performance and job satisfaction. In Step 1, six control variables were entered, including gender, age, marital status, educational level, total organizational tenure, and tenure in the higher education sector. In Step 2, the three components of organizational justice were entered. In Step 3, all possible two-way interactions between justice components were entered. In Step 4, the three-way interactions among justice components were entered. To reduce multicollinearity between interaction terms and main effects, all the justice components were centered on the means when interaction terms were formed (Aiken and West, 1991).

The findings of hierarchical regression analyses are shown in Table IV. After controlling demographic variables in Step 1, the results of the main effects of justice components in Step 2 show that the three organizational justice components – distributive justice ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.01$), procedural justice ($\beta = 0.14$, $p < 0.05$), and interactional justice ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.01$) – positively and significantly contribute to job performance, thus supporting *H1a-H1c*. The Step 2 results also show that all the organizational justice components – distributive justice ($\beta = 0.16$, $p < 0.01$), procedural justice ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.01$), and interactional justice ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.01$) – significantly and positively influenced job satisfaction. Hence, these findings support *H2a-H2c*. However, interactional justice appears to be the most important predictor of job satisfaction and job performance, when considering the β coefficient. Depending only on the β coefficient may produce misleading or faulty information about the relative weight (RW) of each predictor, especially true when there is a correlation between predictor variables. Using relative weight analysis (RWA) is a helpful mechanism for interpreting a regression equation when criterion variables are correlated, and provides a more precise partitioning of the total predicted criterion variance (R2) relative to the contribution of each predictor (Johnson, 2000).

To investigate the RW of each justice component, this study conducted an RWA using RWA-web, a statistical tool developed by Tonidandel and LeBreton (2015), to test *H3*. The analysis, based on bootstrapping with 10,000 replications, uses 95% confidence intervals (CI) for each of the RWs. This is a method recommended by Tonidandel *et al.* (2009) for generating a 95% CI around each weight to determine if significant amount of variance is explained in the criterion variable by each predictor. For the purpose of analysis, a predictor does not explain a significant amount of variance in the criterion variable at the $p < 0.05$ level when a construct with a 95% CI contains a value of 0 or below. The findings from this analysis are presented in Table V. The RWA revealed that all the

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Distributive justice	3.18	0.912	(0.78)				
2. Procedural justice	3.31	0.917	0.20**	(0.87)			
3. Interactional justice	3.42	0.958	0.29**	0.64**	(0.94)		
4. Job satisfaction	3.29	0.998	0.29**	0.43**	0.47**	(0.89)	
5. Job performance	3.46	0.991	0.35**	0.41**	0.50**	0.51**	(0.93)

Note: **Significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

Variables	R^2	ΔR^2	Job performance F	ΔF	β	R^2	ΔR^2	Job satisfaction F	ΔF	β
Step 1: control variables	0.03		2.34*			0.03		2.35*		
Gender					0.18***					0.14**
Age					−0.06					0.04
Marital status					−0.02					−0.07
Educational level					0.06					0.08
Total organizational tenure					−0.04					0.01
Higher education tenure					0.10					0.02
Step 2: main effects	0.34	0.30	20.73***	55.40***		0.32	0.28	18.75***	49.63***	
Distributive justice (DJ)					0.20***					0.15***
Procedural justice (PJ)					0.17***					0.24***
Interactional justice (IJ)					0.32***					0.27***
Step 3: two-way interactions	0.37	0.03	17.44***	5.32***		0.34	0.02	15.27***	3.61*	
DJ × PJ					−0.05					−0.10
DJ × IJ					−0.15*					−0.03
PJ × IJ					0.01					−0.04
Step 4: three-way interaction	0.37	0.00	16.06***	0.078		0.34	0.00	14.32***	2.26	
DJ × PJ × IJ					0.02					0.11

Notes: *⩽ 0.05; **⩽ 0.01; ***⩽0.001

Table IV.
Summary of hierarchical regression analyses for variables predicting job satisfaction and performance

Variables	Job performance RW	RS-RW (%)	CI-L	CI-U	Job satisfaction RW	RS-RW (%)	CI-L	CI-U
Gender	0.025*	7.37	0.0017	0.0609	0.018	5.81	−0.0188	0.03842
Age	0.001	0.21	−0.0179	0.0058	0.002	0.88	−0.0356	0.0060
Marital status	0.002	0.75	−0.0075	0.0206	0.008	2.54	−0.0289	0.0181
Educational level	0.001	0.43	−0.0108	0.0145	0.004	1.44	−0.0342	0.0098
Total organizational tenure	0.001	0.21	−0.0169	0.0047	0.003	1.14	−0.0345	0.0061
Higher education tenure	0.001	0.49	−0.0134	0.0110	0.001	0.47	−0.0378	0.0024
Distributive justice	0.075*	22.09	0.0290	0.1374	0.046*	14.40	0.0027	0.0862
Procedural justice	0.089*	26.00	0.0422	0.1526	0.108*	33.87	0.0396	0.1592
Interactional justice	0.145*	42.41	0.0893	0.2082	0.126*	39.40	0.0535	0.17963
R^2	0.34				0.32			

Notes: RW = raw relative weights that add up to the R^2 within a round-off error; RS-RW = relative weight rescaled as a percentage of anticipated variance explained by each predictor in the independent variable; CI-U = upper bound of confidence interval by which the statistical significance of raw weights is tested; CI-L = lower bound of confidence interval by which the statistical significance of raw weights is tested. *⩽ 0.05

Table V.
Summary of relative weight analyses

justice components accounted for a statically significant amount of variance in job performance and job satisfaction as the 95% CIs for distributive, procedural, and interactional justice did not contain 0. The RWA indicates that among justice components, interactional justice is the most important predictor of job performance (RW = 0.14, $p < 0.05$), and job satisfaction (RW = 0.12, $p < 0.05$), thus supporting *H3*.

Steps 3 and 4 (shown in Table IV) indicate that only the two-way interaction between distributive justice and interactional justice was significant as it pertained to job performance ($\beta = -0.15$, $p < 0.01$), while all the other two-way and three-way interactions between justice components were not significant in relation to job satisfaction and job performance.

To understand the nature of the two-way interaction between distributive and interactional justice, following the procedures proposed by Aiken and West (1991), this study plotted the interaction effect for low and high levels of the interactional justice one standard deviation below and above the mean of interactional justice. Figure 1 indicates that when interactional justice was high, the relationship between distributive justice and job performance was not significant. That is, the simple slope was significant ($\beta = 0.38$, $t(363) = 3.24$, $p < 0.01$) for high interactional justice. This relationship was significant when interactional justice was low, that is, when the simple slope was not significant ($\beta = 0.04$, $t(363) = 0.76$, $p > 0.05$) for low interactional justice. Thus, H4 was only partially supported, and H5 and H6 were rejected.

Discussion

The essential purpose of this research was to replicate and expand on studies investigating organizational justice in western countries to the KRI by examining the main and interactive effects of organizational justice components in relation to job performance and job satisfaction. The results of this work contribute to the current literature, as no previous research has investigated justice perceptions pertaining to work-related outcomes in the KRI, which is a developing, non-western context. This study's results exhibit differences and similarities when compared to the findings of investigations conducted in developed western countries.

Regarding the main effects of organizational justice components, this paper concluded that interactional, distributive, and procedural justice significantly and positively contribute to job performance. This result corroborates the results of Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001), Colquitt et al. (2001), Shan et al. (2015), and Suliman and Kathairi (2013). This work further found that the three justice components positively and significantly contribute to job satisfaction. This result is in concurrence with the results of Choi (2011), Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001), Colquitt et al. (2001), Garcia-Izquierdo et al. (2012), Hao et al. (2016), Khan et al. (2015), and Lambert et al. (2007). These findings indicate that the perception of the three components of justice affects the tendency of employees to reciprocate with better performance and to feel more satisfied with their jobs, although the results of this study are different in terms of the relative importance of each justice component related to each outcome when compared to studies conducted in western countries. These results prove the
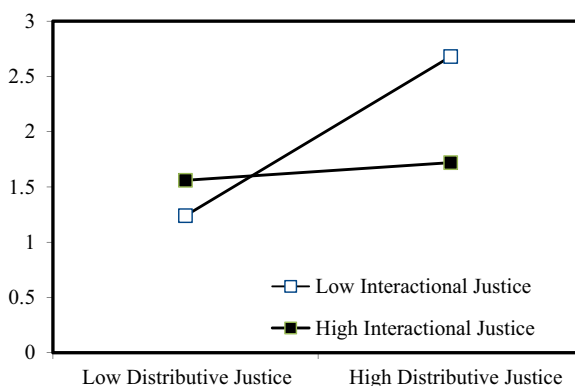
Figure 1.
Interaction effects of distributive and interactional justice on job performance

generalizability of justice studies to the context of the KRI. Thus, this work responds to the call of Fischer (2013) and Shao *et al.* (2013) to conduct studies on organizational justice related to work outcomes in cultures different to those of western countries.

As the interest in justice is universal, previous scholars have proposed that the influences of justice perceptions on various work-related outcomes tend to differ across cultural and national settings (Li and Cropanzano, 2009; Schilpzand *et al.*, 2013). The findings of this work showed that the largest amount of variation related to job performance and job satisfaction is attributed to interactional justice in the context of the KRI. Given that, the concern for interactional justice in this study's context is different from the context in western countries, which found that compared to interactional justice, distributive or procedural justice has the largest effect on work outcomes, such as job performance and job satisfaction (Chien *et al.*, 2010; Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Colquitt *et al.*, 2001; Zapata-Phelan *et al.*, 2009). The findings concluded here suggest that employees in the KRI place greater importance on interpersonal interactions received from their managers and organizational representatives during procedures and decisions about outcomes. The results show that support, dignity, respect, and honesty are the most importance motives for obtaining high performing and satisfied employees in the KRI. The reason for this outcome could be that there are contextual factors that are likely to affect the association of work outcomes with justice components, such as an employee's culture or ethnicity (Fischer, 2008, 2013; Leung, 1988). As previously described, the key contextual characteristics of the KRI are its collectivist and high power distance culture. The high power distance culture leads people to accept power without questioning, making them less likely to voice opinions on decisions made about their outcomes, and consequently, they are likely to anticipate that the outcomes are allocated without procedural justification (Kirkman *et al.*, 2009). On the other hand, people from collectivistic cultures are less worried with personal goals and the amount of rewards or outcomes each employee receives from an organization. This rule of equality shows employees put more stress on building trust and good relationships among individuals and are less concerned about individual rewards (Giacobbe-Miller *et al.*, 2003; Leung, 1988). It is reasonable to assume that an employee's relationship with their immediate manager is stronger than their relationship with their organization, placing greater importance on interactional justice. For these reasons, the employees in the KRI do not share the same expectations of fairness as employees in the individualistic cultures of the West, where higher importance is placed on distributive or procedural justice.

Concerning the interaction effects, the results here indicate that among all the possible two-way and three-way interactions, only the interaction between distributive justice and interactional justice was significantly related to job performance. The interaction pattern, in concurrence with Folger's (1993) RCT, reveals that when interactional justice is low, the relationship between distributive justice and job performance is significant, indicating that the low level of distributive justice can be partially compensated for by higher level of interactional justice. Even when an employee receives low levels of distributive justice, in the form of low salary and rewards or decreased opportunities for promotion, he or she may be not lowering their performance level if treated with respect and provided with explanation. In contrast, treatment perceived as rude may lead to employee resentment, and in turn lowering performance levels (Fields *et al.*, 2000). The study results confirm that employees tended to place a greater importance on the social or interpersonal treatment of justice because of the collectivist nature of the KRI, which highly values a respectful manner, support, and dignity – an outcome regarded as essential as other work-related rewards or outcomes. The results also determined that all possible interaction effects related to job satisfaction were insignificant. Our results showed that low level of distributive justice is not compensated across all levels of procedural justice or interactional justice, likely due to the fact that employee job satisfaction is a multifaceted construct and includes

an appraisal of the entire organization, involving supervisors, pay, the work itself, procedures, and policies that greatly influence decision making (Chien *et al.*, 2010; Colquitt *et al.*, 2001). Distributing rewards fairly, being treated fairly, and having fair processes and procedures are separately evaluated by employees, showing that each justice component has an independent impact on job satisfaction.

Limitations and future research

This study has several limitations that future researchers may take into consideration. First, the data were obtained from a cross-sectional study; therefore, this study is unable to establish solid causal relationships among the dependent and independent variables which may raise concern about CMV. Future researchers should conduct longitudinal studies to assure these causal relationships and replicate the findings of this study. Second, this research did not measure and test contextual and cultural factors that may impact the relationships between perceptions of justice, job satisfaction, and job performance. Future researchers should perform other studies to test the moderating effect of cultural and contextual factors such as collectivism/individualism, power distance between justice dimensions, and work outcomes. Third, although the two-way interaction concluded in this study was significant, the interaction model jointly accounted for a relatively small (15 percent) amount of the variance in job performance. Future replications are especially necessary because the results were relatively weak, though statistically significant (De Cremer *et al.*, 2010). Fourth, the scope of this study was limited by focusing on organizational justice perceptions and their influences on job performance and job satisfaction only. Future scholars should perform studies on organizational justice related to a greater range of employee attitudes, such as organizational commitment and turnover intention, and employee behaviors such as OCB, workplace deviance, and absenteeism in order to obtain a full understand of the impact of justice components on employee behaviors and attitudes in the context of the KRI. Fifth, although sampling from higher education institutions provided appropriate data for this study, collecting data from a single type of organization limits the generalizability, suggesting the need to use samples from other institutions or organizations to improve the generalizability of the findings.

Conclusions and implications for managers

Despite the limitations noted in the previous section, this work has achieved its aim. The results support the relationships between organizational justice perceptions and job performance and job satisfaction, and among the components of organizational justice, interactional justice was more strongly related to job satisfaction and job performance. By investigating the interaction effects of the three justice components with one another in relation to work outcomes, this work concluded that interactional justice interacts with distributive justice to affect job performance, providing further evidence for the main and interaction effects of justice components in an eastern context.

The current work also reveals crucial implications for managers in the KRI. Managers must concentrate on all components of organizational justice, particularly interactional justice. When managers implement procedures at work, it is necessary to constantly develop and evaluate the way employees are treated, especially in terms of social aspects such as dignity, support, and respect. A manager with a western background may believe that if procedures are explicit and clear, employees will perceive the outcome as fair, and probably place more emphasis on procedural justice (Van Dijke *et al.*, 2012). Procedural justice may be ensured through this practice, but will not necessarily result in well-performing and satisfied employees. The findings revealed that employees care more about the way managers treat them than the way managers describe and implement procedures. Accordingly, managers need to ensure a fair environment nurtured by interactional justice,

because the quality of interactions and exchanges between employees and their immediate managers is crucial to perform better and to feel more satisfied (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Suliman and Kathairi, 2013). The demonstrated interaction effect between distributive and interactional justice on job performance suggests that treating employees with respect and providing sound explanations yields a salient impact on job performance, especially when employees perceive a low level of distributive justice. Employees not only perform well due to how much rewards or outcomes they get, but also how they are interpersonally treated when decisions are made about distributing rewards and outcomes.

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