

## Examining Coaches' Perceptions of how Organisational Justice Affects Organisational Support

Ooi Cheng Lee, Aminuddin Yusof, Soh Kim Geok and Zoharah Omar

Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia

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### Abstract

This study aimed to examine how school volunteer coaches perceived the relationship between four-dimensional of organisational justice (procedural, distributive, interpersonal, and informational justices) and perceived organisational support. A cross-sectional correlational research mail survey was conducted on 750 Malaysian school volunteer coaches by applying proportionate stratified random sampling techniques. The data were analysed using IBM SPSS and structural equation modeling with AMOS. Results showed all dimension of organisational justice with the exception of procedural justice are associated with perceived organisational support. This finding has contradicted a majority of past literature findings that procedural justice has the strongest influenced on organisational outcomes. The results suggest the need to craft fair procedures or policies that allow freedom of voice in the volunteer coach management system. A sound system of procedural justice is important for the organisation to demonstrate its support towards volunteer coaches, in order to attract their emotional attachment and loyalty to coach for the organisation in the long run.

**Keywords:** Coaching, Sports Volunteerism, High School Sports

### Introduction

Sport volunteers contribute to the success of the sport industry and constituted approximately 0.9% of the average gross domestic profit among 15 countries (Salamon, Sokolowski, Haddock, and Tice, 2012). Yet, the importance of sport-for-development volunteers has been undermined when compared with elite sport in volunteerism research (Peachey, Lyras, Cohen & Bruening, 2014), particularly volunteer coaches in the developmental sport. In Malaysia, grassroots sports development program under the Sports Division of the Ministry of Education (MOE) relies fully on volunteer school sports coaches. These volunteer coaches receive no remuneration to develop student-athletes under the High-Performance School Sports Developmental Program (SPTS), a competitive school sports program organised by the Sports Division of MOE.

Volunteer sport coaches not only develop athletes' sports skills and knowledge, but also guide their personal and social growth (Fletcher & Scott, 2010). They are the quality controller of youth sport participation and performance in sport delivery programmes (Harman & Doherty, 2014). In line with this, Cuskelly, Taylor, Hoyer & Darcy (2006, p. 123) have highlighted that "coaches are often the most tangible manifestation of organisational quality and effectiveness in the sport context and are a crucial component of the sport experience for most participants". Therefore, it is important to retain such a scarce resource (Harman & Doherty, 2014). In order to have a better understanding about effective programme delivery by these volunteer coaches, the volunteer-organisation relationship may provide valuable insights on how organisational justice and perceived organisational support influence school volunteer sport coaches organisational commitment.

In many countries, organisational support is paramount for volunteer youth sport coaches development. Perceived organisational support was developed based on the Organisational Support Theory. This theory posits that "... the organisation's readiness to reward increased work effort and to meet socio-emotional needs, employees develop global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organisation values their contribution and cares about their well-being" (Rhodes & Eisenberger, 2002, p. 698). Perceived organisational support is personified by favourable treatment from the organisation, such as organisational justice (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). In the sport management literature, perceived organisational support only caught little attention, such as among student-workers in recreational sports department of a university (Pack, Jordon, Turner, & Haines, 2007); National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I athletes (Rocha & Chelladurai, 2011); and administrators (Pack, 2005).

Organisational justice is the strongest antecedent of perceived organisational support (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). It evaluates perceptions of employees on workplace fairness (Greenberg, 1990). It is also related to organisational commitment, job satisfaction, job performance, evaluation of authority, organisational citizenship behaviour, trust, and withdrawal (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001). Drawing on Colquitt (2001), the present study applied four-dimensional organisational justice, which comprises procedural, distributive, interpersonal, and informational justices as an antecedent of perceived organisational support. Distributive justice refers to the fairness of outcomes; procedural justice indicates fairness of the organisation's policies and procedures in decision-making processes; interpersonal justice considers the fairness of interactive treatment, and informational justice reflects on the fairness of justifying and conveying on-time accurate information.

In the sport management setting, most organisational justice research was confined to the United States of America (USA) and focused mostly on NCAA institutions; one in Olympic sport, and three in Texas's high schools (Mahony, Hums, Andrew, & Dittmore, 2010). Such studies examined NCCA coaches (Thorn, 2010), while, Hums and Chelladurai's (1994) focused on both coaches and administrators. On the other hand, only two studies carried out in Texas high schools are related to coaches and examined organisational justice and job satisfaction facet (Whisenant & Smucker, 2009). To date, little is known about the Malaysian high school competitive school sports volunteer coaches perceptions of organisational justice, and its impact on perceived organisational support. Previous studies done on coaches in Malaysia have largely been on motivation (Ooi & Yusof, 2015; Chuan, Yusof, Soon & Abdullah, 2014),

coaches' commitment (Lee, Yusof, Soh, & Zohrah, 2014), and decision-making (Sunar, Omar-Fauzee, & Yusof, 2009). It is important to investigate perceived organisational support from the perspectives of volunteer school sport coaches in Malaysia because of the potential of unfair organisational treatment and inadequate organisational support that might lessen their organizational commitment to coach efficiently and to remain in the organisation. Unfavourable treatment could impair volunteer coaches' trust on the organisation's intention in supporting them with appreciation and care. Subsequently, it might affect their willingness to engage in social exchange and reciprocity process that would bring detrimental effect in achieving the goals of the organisation. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the relationship between four-dimensional of organisational justice (procedural, distributive, interpersonal, and informational justices) and perceived organisational support. The following hypothesis was proposed to examine this relationship as shown below:

- Ha1 There is a positive significant relationship between procedural justice and perceived organisational support from the volunteer coaches' perceptions.
- Ha2 There is a positive significant relationship between distributive justice and perceived organisational support from the volunteer coaches' perceptions.
- Ha3 There is a positive significant relationship between interpersonal justice and perceived organisational support from the volunteer coaches' perceptions
- Ha4 There is a positive significant relationship between informational justice and perceived organisational support from the volunteer coaches' perceptions.

### **Literature Review**

Psychology and management researchers have incredible enthusiasm on the interdependence effect of the employment relationship that could be explained by perceived organisational support. Perceived organisational support is developed based on Organisational Support Theory (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Based on this theory, the mechanism of perceived organisational support can be explained with a combination of another three principles: (1) personification of an agent's action as organisation's wills (Levinson, 1965); (2) Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964); and (3) norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). Organisational Support Theory utilises Levinson's (1965) suggestion on employees personifying their employing organisation through the actions of the organisational agents (such as a supervisor). Hence, if fair or unjust treatment was provided by their organisational agents, it signalled the extent of the organisation favourable or unfavourable treatment towards them regardless of the agents' motives. Factors that influence the personification of the organisation are: (1) organisational agents are legally, morally, and financially accountable by their organisation; (2) organisational agents have execution power over employees on behalf of their organisation; and (3) role behaviour of organisational agents are listed according to their organisation's policies, culture, and norm (Levinson, 1965). In lieu of Levinson's (1965) personification of the organisation, organisational support theory argues that this lead to the formation of global belief towards the degree of how much organisation commits and appreciates their contributions and concerns their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa, 1986).

On the other hand, organisational justice refers to subjective beliefs and perceptions of fairness in the workplace (Greenberg, 1990). Organisational justice is multi-dimensional (Colquitt, 2001). It consists of four dimensions: (1) distributive justice that indicate fairness of outcome; (2) procedural justice that suggest how fairness judgments, procedures or method are made and applied to determine the decision or outcome; (3) interactional justice that addresses the quality of interpersonal treatment and (4) informational justice which refers to the quality of the information (for example, thorough, reasonable, truthful, candid, and timely) being explained or provided by the administrators on why certain procedures were implemented or why outcomes were allocated in a particular manner (Colquitt et al., 2001).

In the first meta-analysis of perceived organisational support which consisted of 73 independent studies published within the time frame from 1986 to 2000 by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002), perceived organisational support was reported to have the strongest relationship with fairness, which is the antecedent of perceived organisational support. This was consistent with Kurtosis, Eisenberger, Ford, Buffardi, Stewart & Adis (2015) in their meta-analysis of 558 studies from the year 1986 to 2011. Perceived organisational support has found to have a strong positive relationship with procedural justice. This indicates that employment relationship began with the fairness of treatment as a mean to infer organisational support either through the supervisor (agent) or the organisation (Roch & Shanock, 2006). Despite the conceptualisation of four-dimension of organisational justice, only a few researchers assessed all four dimensions of justice simultaneously (Chan & Jepsen, 2011).

Chan and Jepsen (2011) studied the impact of the four-dimensional of organisational justice on work place through perceived organisational support and leader-member exchange, and work attitude regarding job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and intention to quit. Findings revealed inconsistencies in organisational justice-perceived organisational support relationships across three contextual differentiated registered clubs in Australia that provided recreational, sporting, and community facilities through 501 (out of 551 respondents received) usable respondents from hospitality and entertainment services (bars, restaurants, and gaming facilities) shift workers (i.e. full-time, part-time, and casual). The customers of Club A and B were lower in social economic status and have higher unemployment rate than Club C. Despite these similarities, Club A focused on football; while Club B on bowling. Findings reported that only distributive justice of Club A's shift workers predicted perceived organisational support; in contradictory, Club B's procedural justice predicted perceived organisational support. On the other hand, Club C's customers portrayed a higher social economic status as the club was well-established and located in a popular beachside. The Club C's employees claimed that informational justice predicted perceived organisational support. The authors analysed the data by hierarchical regression. It is proposed that structural equation modelling will be more parsimony in analysing the variables simultaneously and also taking into consideration of measurement errors. Furthermore, the article only provided information regarding differentiation results of organisational justice-perceived organisational support relationship according to club-type, but, it failed to depict the differences among the three types of shift workers.

DeConinck and Johnson (2009) examined the effects of four-dimensions of organisational justice on 384 salespersons' perceived organisational support, perceived supervisor support, performance, organisational commitment, turnover intention, and turnover. Results showed that procedural justice was positively and significantly related to perceived organisational support; which was consistent with Masterson, Lewis, Goldman & Taylor's (2000) results on 701 employees at a large public university and Roch and Shanock's (2006) findings on 272 alumni of a university in the United States. On the other hand, informational justice and interpersonal justice were positively and significantly related to perceived supervisor support. However, distributive justice was reported to be not related to perceived organisational support, which was in line with Roch and Shanock's (2006) findings; and distributive justice was also found to be unrelated to perceived supervisor support. The findings emphasised that salespeople were expecting for fair interpersonal relationship and information from their supervisors or organisation's representatives for support.

The literature suggests organisational justice, fair and favourable treatment provision from an organisation to its employee is positively important in predicting perceived organisational support. Nevertheless, the four-dimensions of organisational justice is yet to be fully examined in sports setting and in non-Western countries. Drawing on the unique identities of the Malaysian volunteer coaches, different results might be produced contextually and culturally. Sports in Malaysia is not as popular in Western countries, therefore, there is a need to investigate the extent of perceived organisational support in a real field of study to explain the underlying mechanism of organisational justice.

### **Methods**

A total of 767 subjects responded to the survey sent to 1502 volunteer coaches selected using proportionate stratified sampling technique. The coaches were identified based on a list of High-Performance School Sports Developmental Program's volunteer coaches. Due to incomplete responses, some subjects were dropped leaving a total of 750 subjects for the final statistical analysis. The majority of the subjects were 84.6% male with a mean age of 40.43, ranging from 25 to 58 years old. In terms of education, most of the subjects were college graduates (74.53%), hold Malaysian level one sport specific coaching certificates (63.9%) and Malaysian sports science certificates (52.4%). The largest number of subjects (24.7%) was from track and field events followed by field hockey (18.8%), sepak takraw (14.8%), badminton (11.5%), football (10.7%), while netball coaches were the fewest (1.9%). Organisational justice was measured using Colquitt's (2001) 20-item questionnaire while perceived organisational support is measured using the short version of 16 items from the Survey of Perceived Organisational Support (SPOS) developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986).

### **Results**

This study used structural equation modeling with IBM SPSS AMOS 21.0 to do path analysis. The first hypothesis postulated that procedural justice has a positive and significant relationship with perceived organisational support from Malaysian high school competitive school sports volunteer coaches' perceptions. As shown in Table 1, the results of the path analysis displayed that procedural justice did not predict perceived organisational support significant ( $\beta_a = 0.030, p > 0.05$ ). Consequently, Hypothesis 1 was not supported. The second hypothesis predicted that as distributive justice increased, so would perceptions of these SPTS volunteer coaches toward perceived organisational support by the sport organisation. The

path coefficient from distributive justice to perceived organisational support was found to be significant ( $\beta_a = 0.260$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). It indicated that by increasing one standard deviation of distributive justice, perceived organisational support would increase by 0.260 of standard deviation among the volunteer coaches. Briefly, if the volunteer coaches experience fairer allocation (distributive justice) in term of monetary, facilities, and sport equipment, they may consider the organisation as being more supported and committed to them by showing its appreciation and care towards them

Table 1:

*Relationships between Four-dimensional of Organisational Justice and Perceived Organisational Support*

H <sub>A</sub>	Causal Path	a	b	S.E.	Beta	C.R.	p
HA1	PJ →	POS	0.049	0.061	0.030	0.796	0.426
HA2	DJ →	POS	0.314	0.044	0.260	7.187	0.001***
HA3	TJ →	POS	0.216	0.054	0.154	4.026	0.001***
HA4	FJ →	POS	0.674	0.069	0.455	9.772	0.001***

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ;  $R^2 = 0.60$

PJ = Procedural Justice, DJ = Distributive Justice, TJ = Interpersonal Justice, FJ = Informational Justice, POS = Perceived Organisational Support

The third hypothesis examines the positive and significant relationship between interpersonal justice and perceived organisational support. Results derived from the path analysis indicated a positive significant relationship between interpersonal justice and perceived organisational support ( $\beta_a = 0.154$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The results suggest by an increment of one standard deviation of interpersonal justice, would enhance perceived organisational support by 0.154 of standard deviation. It meant fairer and more tactful interpersonal treatment by the organization towards the volunteer coaches would encourage them to believe in the organisation as appreciative of their contribution and care of their well-being.

The fourth hypothesis proposed a relationship between informational justice and perceived organisational support. Informational justice referred to how fair information is being conveyed in the right timing, and accurately by the organisation. Perceived organisational support indicated the degree of gratitude and care that the organisation has provided to the volunteer coaches. Results of the path analysis revealed that informational justice and perceived organisational support were positive and significantly linked ( $\beta_a = 0.455$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). By virtue of increasing one standard deviation in conveying information correctly and in the right timing, volunteer coaches' beliefs in the organization commitment to them in valuing their contribution, supporting their endeavours, and cares about their well-being would be increased by 0.455.

By comparing the relationships between the four dimensions of organisational justice and perceived organisational support, informational justice has emerged as the strongest predictor of perceived organisational support. It was followed by distributive justice and interpersonal justice sequentially. Procedural justice was not a factor that attributes to perceived organisational support among the volunteer coaches. All the four-dimensional of organisational justice explained 60% of perceived organisational support ( $R^2 = 0.60$ ).

**Discussion**

In this study, there was a significant relationship between informational justice and perceived organisational support. The volunteer coaches have the perceptions that their superiors have provided clear accurate information and informed any decisions made about the programme in a timely manner. This is seen as an indicator of the organisation's appreciation and care support for the volunteer coaches. It has been suggested in the literature that an information-rich environment in organisations not only reduce uncertainty and conflict, but is also able to enhance trust, meaningfulness and safety (Kerwin, Jordan, & Turner, 2015). This notion was proposed by Fair Heuristic Theory that justice develops trust (Lind, 2001), and posited by uncertainty management theory that justice also relieves trust-related uncertainty and other worries (Lind & Van den Bos, 2002). Hence, volunteer coaches who perceived higher informational justice would regard the superior's actions as providing organisational support to them in performing their coaching duties. This result is consistent with Cheung's (2013) study of Hong Kong's engineers where informational justice was perceived as an organisational aid to equip employees with the competitive advantage for career growth. In addition, the present research findings also have demonstrated that Malaysia as a hierarchical society with a strong emphasis on collectivism valued informational justice. This contradicted with Fischer, Ferreira, Jiang, Cheng, & Assmar's (2011) assertion that the importance of informational justice of non-western countries was cancelled off by relative group membership in the cultural context based on the relational model of authority.

The results showed high school volunteer coaches perceived a positive relationship between distributive justice (in term of budget, rewards, incentives, sport equipment, and sport training facilities) and perceived organisational support. This suggests that an adequate allocation of sports resources provided by the superiors would be perceived by the coaches as the organisation valuing and caring about them. This finding is in line with Jordan, Turner & Pack's (2009) study where they found that distributive justice was strongly related with perceived organisation support among 152 student employees under a university recreational sports setting. Although it was unclear what resources were provided by the organisation, the volunteer coaches are dependent on them for performing their coaching duties. As the school sports programme in Malaysia focuses on organised sports, volunteer coaches would possibly have high expectations for resources distribution based on "need because of lack of resources", "need because of high cost", or/and "need because of competitive success". These principles were similar with NCAA Division III allocation principles even though it also considers equality distribution as fair (Patrick, Mahony, & Petrosko, 2008). In accordance, this finding might facilitate the organisation in making wiser distribution decisions and outcome to accommodate the volunteer coaches' needs for their specific sport.

The result supported the relationship between interpersonal justice and perceived organisational support. Based on Organisational Support Theory (Eisenberg et al., 1986), the result showed that whenever treatment such as politeness, dignity, and respect was received by the coaches, those actions were perceived as organisation's goodwill. The research finding was also supported by Cheung's (2013) study that Hong Kong's engineers perceived reception of dignifying and respectful interpersonal treatment from the organisation as perceived organisational support for future career advancement. Maintaining interpersonal harmony with others is part of the collectivist culture of East Asians when compared with North Americans who are higher in the personal self-concept of individualistic culture (Li &

Cropanzano, 2009). Thus, the coaches superiors have to be sensitive to how they communicate respect and invite social inclusion as fair interpersonal treatment (i.e. interpersonal justice) to make the coaches feel connected and cared for, and further fostered higher perceived organisational support (Hansen, Bryne, & Kiersch (2014).

Finally, there was no significant relationship between procedural justice and perceived organisational support. The results suggest that procedural justice was not a factor in forming volunteer coaches' beliefs on perceived organisational support. This might be due to the fact that these coaches have often been overlooked by the government even though the programme plays an essential role in nurturing grassroots developmental sports athletes, and for making elite developmental sports of Malaysia a success. This is because the school sports programme in Malaysia is not part of the formal co-curriculum activities in Malaysian schools. Consequently, it is not being fully recognised by school administrators. Hence, volunteer coaches have to face a lot of challenges and pressures, particularly, for those who have coached in the District Training Centers. When an organisation does not provide a recognition status (Tyler & Lind, 1992), create a sense of controllable and predictable fair outcome for personal goals (Cropanzano & Ambrose, 2001) and mitigate uncertainty and pressure in volunteer coaching (Van den Bos & Lind, 2001), the volunteer coaches would find it hard to perceive the organization as being supportive, value or care for them. This would create a power distance and role-defined privilege in a hierarchical society like Malaysia (Li & Cropanzano, 2009).

### **Conclusion**

This study has transcended theoretical rationale of organisational support theory for providing a better understanding of how organisational justice affects organisation support of school volunteer coaches. In this study, the hypothesis on procedural justice was found to be not significant. If pursuing excellent sport development is Malaysia's main goal, then the policy makers at the Sports Division of Ministry of Education in Malaysia must refine its procedural justice. This is because the fair process, control and voice during developing procedures and implementing decisions can affect fair outcomes (Thibault & Walker, 1975). Briefly, it defines the structural and functional system of the Malaysian high school competitive school sports volunteer management and regulative framework. It also should entail Leventhal's (1980) criteria of consistent, free of bias, accurate remedy, morality, and representativeness. This is to ensure an efficient and effective operation. By improving procedural justice, it may legitimise sports officers, school administrators, and the volunteer coaches to comply voluntarily with their roles. Further, the availability of these volunteer coaches' voice and control in the decision-making processes may enhance acceptance and verdict of favourable and even unfavourable decision outcomes. Insufficient representative and lack of transparency may disrupt negotiation and the effectiveness for reaching consensus and establishing standard procedures (Albin & Druckman, 2014). The results of this study suggest the importance of fair procedures or policies that will allow volunteer coaches to give feedback on how to improve the volunteer coach management system. Finally, it is also important to demonstrate support towards volunteer coaches, because not only will this results in emotional attachment and but also long term loyalty to coach for the organization

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