

ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE AND EMPLOYEE CYNICISM: CAN TRUST MEDIATE?

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ABSTRACT: This study examines how employee cynicism, characterized by negativity, skepticism, and distrust, can hinder productivity and organizational success. To understand this phenomenon in public organizations, we surveyed 163 public servants in East Java, Indonesia. We analyzed the data across different organizational sizes, performance levels, and strategic goals using an exploratory-based structural-equation model. Our findings reveal three key points. First, employees experience less cynicism when they perceive fairness, equality, and transparency in the workplace, highlighting the importance of organizational justice. Second, employee trust acts as a protective factor, further reducing cynicism. Finally, employee trust mediates the relationship between organizational justice and cynicism, suggesting that fostering trust strengthens the link between fair treatment and positive employee attitudes. These results emphasize the importance of staff departments and leadership promoting both organizational fairness and trust to create a healthier and more productive work environment.

Keywords: Organizational Justice; Trust; Employee Cynicism; Civil Servants

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INTRODUCTION

Modern organizations struggle with employee cynicism since it affects several working traits. Cynical employees are pessimistic, skeptical, and mistrustful, which lowers morale, productivity, and organizational effectiveness. In order to effectively address the issue at hand, it is imperative to accurately identify the underlying factors that contribute to employee skepticism. Organizations may effectively mitigate cynicism and cultivate a positive work environment by comprehensively understanding these concerns and implementing targeted strategies and actions (Zeidan & Prentice, 2022). These tactics have the potential to improve employee morale, increase productivity levels, and make a positive impact on the overall performance of the firm.

The idea of organizational justice has significant importance in comprehending employees' perceptions of fairness inside the workplace (Masterson, 2001). The concept incorporates many elements, including distributional, procedural, and interactional justice. The characteristics under consideration pertain to the principles of equal distribution of incentives, openness and fairness in decision-making procedures, and the provision of respectful and equitable treatment by members within an organization. Numerous studies have unequivocally demonstrated the significant impact of organizational justice in molding employee attitudes and behavior (Treviño & Weaver, 2001). The extent to which organizational justice impacts employee cynicism, which is characterized by negative views and skepticism, has been inadequately explored in existing research. Gaining a thorough comprehension of these fundamental mechanisms is crucial in the formulation of comprehensive methods aimed at effectively addressing and alleviating employee cynicism within organizational contexts (Arslan & Roudaki, 2019).

Trust has a pivotal function in creating favorable connections within organizational contexts (Rahayuningsih, 2019). The concept involves the establishment of trust and belief among employees towards the company and its members, with a focus on prioritizing their well-being, fulfilling obligations, and ensuring the protection of personal information (Vanhala et al., 2016). The significance of trust in shaping employee attitudes, such as cynicism, has been extensively recognized (Kumar & Saha, 2017). Further work is required to explore the specific role of trust in regulating the relationship between organizational justice and employee cynicism. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the functioning of trust as a mechanism within this particular relationship might yield significant insights into the impact of organizational justice on levels of employee cynicism (Fiaz et al., 2021). By examining the intermediary function of trust, firms may enhance their comprehension of how to foster trust, encourage equity, and proficiently tackle employee skepticism inside the workplace (Gulati & Wohlgezogen, 2023).

This study examines the correlation between corporate fairness and employee skepticism. This study delves deeper into the function of trust as an intermediary variable. Mediating variables aid in comprehending the intricate connection between organizational justice and employee cynicism. Moreover,

analyzing this connection directly will impact employee cynicism by fostering trust.

The researcher acknowledges that research demonstrates the intricate connection between organizational fairness and employee cynicism. This research will concentrate on a notion that can impact the relationship between the two parties by introducing the trust variable. A study conducted by Nan and Selama (2022) has demonstrated that organizational justice directly influences employee cynicism, while overlooking the role of trust as an intervening element. The gaps impede our comprehension of the intricate dynamics and obstruct the creation of impactful influence (Mubashar et al., 2022).

The predominant approach employs social interaction theory from Blau (1964) to comprehend the intricate connection between trust and moderate the relationship between organizational fairness and employee cynicism. This theory posits that individuals engage in social relationships guided by notions of fairness and reciprocity. Employees that believe in organizational justice are more likely to exhibit good behaviors, such as increased trust in the business and less cynical views (Archimi et al., 2018). Deception erodes trust and results in unfavorable attitudes and actions.

The principal aim of this study is to investigate the influence of trust on employee cynicism and the relationship between organizational justice. The proposition suggests that there is a relationship between employee cynicism and the concept of organizational justice, with trust acting as a mediating variable in this relationship. The perception of a substantial level of justice inside the workplace is anticipated to negatively impact employees' trust in the organization (Holley et al., 2023). As confidence inside an organization strengthens, employees tend to have a greater inclination towards perceiving the company in a favorable light. This inclination is characterized by attributing acts and choices made by the business to good intentions, rather than adopting a skeptical stance (Takemoto et al., 2021). On the contrary, in cases where organizational justice is considered to be inadequate, trust may deteriorate, resulting in an increase in cynicism among employees who become more inclined to question the organization's intentions and behaviors (Turgut et al., 2016). This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the underlying mechanisms by which organizational justice contributes to the development of employee cynicism. Specifically, it examines the mediating role of trust in this nexus investigation (Mubashar et al., 2022).

This study aims to explore the intricate relationship between organizational justice, trust, and employee cynicism by examining the mediating role of trust. Through an investigation into the functioning of trust as a mechanism via which organizational justice influences cynicism, this research aims to reveal significant insights into the fundamental processes and dynamics of these variables. The results of this study will offer companies a more extensive comprehension of the variables that lead to employee cynicism and the significance of trust in alleviating its adverse consequences (Shaharruddin et al., 2016). With this acquired knowledge, companies have the ability to formulate specific strategies and interventions aimed at cultivating trust, improving justice,

and successfully addressing employee cynicism. Consequently, these efforts contribute to the creation of a work environment that is characterized by positivity and productivity (McManus & Mosca, 2015). The ultimate objective is to provide a professional setting that embodies principles of equity, trustworthiness, and less skepticism, hence resulting in elevated levels of employee contentment, involvement, and overall organizational achievement.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Organizational Justice

The concept of organizational justice pertains to the perception of fairness inside the workplace. This encompasses several aspects such as the equitable allocation of incentives, the fairness of decision-making processes, and the quality of interpersonal treatment (Rehman et al., 2023). The phenomenon under consideration has significant importance in influencing the attitudes, actions, and overall outcomes inside an organization. The perception of fairness in the allocation of incentives, such as promotions and compensation, has been found to positively impact employee satisfaction and motivation. The concept of procedural justice centers around the principles of transparency and inclusivity in decision-making processes, and it has been found to positively impact employee trust, engagement, and perceptions of fairness (He et al., 2014). The promotion of healthy employee connections, contentment, and trust in leadership is facilitated by the practice of interactional justice, which encompasses the provision of fair and attentive treatment (Wu et al., 2012).

Organizations that place a high emphasis on prioritizing and advocating for organizational justice are able to cultivate a favorable work environment, which in turn facilitates the development of trust, collaboration, and a perception of equity among workers (Myhill & Bradford, 2013). Organizations may boost employee happiness, engagement, and overall performance by implementing equitable policies, adopting transparent decision-making procedures, and fostering respectful communication (Abel, 2013). The establishment of organizational justice is a pivotal element in the construction of a conducive and flourishing work milieu, whereby employees experience a sense of worth, regard, and motivation to exert their utmost endeavors (Kasemsap, 2017).

Based on previous research conducted by Tayfur et al. (2013), as well as Nan and Muhammad (2022) empirical findings have demonstrated a connection between decreased employee cynicism and organizational fairness. That is, when an organization is seen of being fair and reasonable in reality, it can successfully lower the degree of cynicism held by its staff. Organizations may cultivate an atmosphere that promotes trust and mitigates skepticism and distrust among workers by adhering to principles of fairness in employee treatment, maintaining transparency in decision-making processes, and consistently implementing policies (Rawlins & Rawlins, 2014; Seifert et al., 2016).

H1: Organizational Justice affects employee cynicism

Trust

Organizational trust encompasses the perception and assurance that individuals hold regarding an organization's dependability, ethical principles, and reputation (Khouya & Benabdelhadi, 2021). The prevailing belief is that the organization and its constituents would prioritize the welfare of employees, honor their obligations, and uphold the principle of secrecy. The establishment of organizational trust is predicated upon several key elements, including but not limited to: fostering an environment of open and honest communication, ensuring openness in decision-making procedures, maintaining consistent conduct, and exemplifying ethical beliefs and principles (Bowen et al., 2016). The establishment of trust plays a pivotal role in cultivating favorable connections within the organizational context, facilitating employee engagement, and cultivating a work environment that is characterized by support and collaboration (Addison & Teixeira, 2020). It functions as an adhesive agent that fosters cohesion among individuals, enables efficient collaboration, and amplifies overall organizational efficacy. Trust is a crucial commodity that firms must create and nurture to establish credibility, inspire confidence, and sustain the dedication and devotion of workers (Dromereschi, 2010).

Employees that possess a heightened level of confidence in their respective organizations are inclined to exhibit a more favorable attitude and are less susceptible to the detrimental effects of cynicism (Ozyilmaz et al., 2018; Singh & Srivastava, 2013). Conversely, individuals with low trust tend to be more cynical and have a higher skepticism towards the company (Behazad, 2020; Schabram & Robinson, 2015). Existing literature has demonstrated that employee trust may be influenced by several aspects, including clear communication inside the business, fair treatment by the organization, managerial support, and possibilities for career growth (Jiang & Luo, 2018; Kaliappan & Kavitha, 2019; Klimchak et al., 2020). Furthermore, the implementation of trust-building actions by firms has the potential to mitigate employee skepticism (Lissillour & Sahut, 2023; Ozyilmaz et al., 2018).

H2: Trust affects employee cynicism

Employee Cynicism

Employee cynicism is characterized by a pessimistic mindset and a sense of doubt exhibited by employees towards their company, its leaders, and its operational procedures (Tamer & Ozkan, 2020). Employees with a cynical disposition often exhibit a worldview characterized by skepticism and criticism, harboring doubts on the underlying motives and intentions driving corporate choices and actions (Richards & Kosmala, 2013). Individuals may demonstrate emotions such as disillusionment, exasperation, and resentment in relation to their workplace, coworkers, and management (Durrah et al., 2019). Cynicism among employees can be observed in the form of disengagement, reduced motivation, and a lack of dedication towards the firm (Abugre & Acquaaah, 2022). It can also lead to negative behaviors such as reduced cooperation, increased absenteeism, and lower job satisfaction. Employee cynicism can have detrimental

effects on individual well-being, team dynamics, and overall organizational performance if not effectively addressed (Chiaburu et al., 2013). Organizations need to identify and understand the underlying causes of cynicism in order to develop strategies and interventions to mitigate its impact and foster a more positive work environment (Sullivan & Bendell, 2023). Research by DeConinck (2010) and Mubashar (2022) reveals that the organizational trust might serve as a mediator variable for the association between organizational justice and employee cynicism, implying that firms must cultivate a feeling of trust in addition to offering organizational justice.

H3: Organizational justice influences employee cynicism mediated by Trust

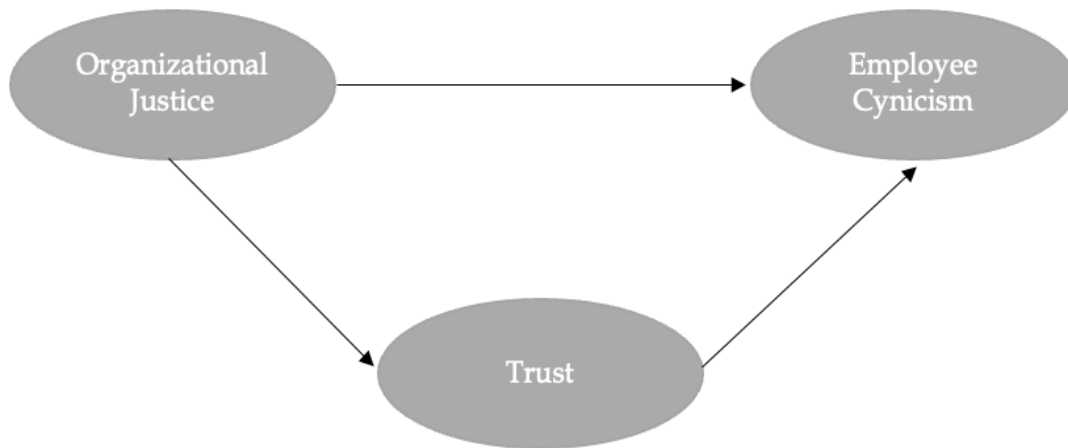


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Utilizing quantitative survey methodologies, we employ a comprehensive approach to gather valuable insights from a diverse pool of staff members spanning across various organizations. Within this meticulously designed survey instrument, it is imperative to incorporate validated scales in assessing employee perceptions related to organizational justice, trust, and cynicism. The primary aim of this data collection endeavor is to scrutinize and illuminate the intricate dynamics of belief as a mediating factor in organizational contexts, necessitating the utilization of advanced statistical techniques, including mediation analysis. Thus, we employ partial-least-square structural-equation modelling with Smartpls 3 to analyze the findings. The validity, reliability, collinearity serve as the precursors of hypothesis testing.

Our data acquisition strategy extends beyond traditional boundaries, encompassing a wide array of social media platforms, namely Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, and email, thus ensuring a robust and inclusive data pool. This approach not only enhances the cost and efficiency aspects of data collection but also embraces the advantages of snowball sampling (see Table 1 for the demographic descriptions). Snowball sampling, known for its economic benefits and efficiency gains, allows us to cast a wider net in reaching potential respondents through referrals from existing participants. This method helps us

tap into networks and connections that might otherwise remain inaccessible through traditional means.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations inherent in snowball sampling, such as non-random selection and potential confidentiality concerns. The non-random selection aspect implies that participants are not chosen through random sampling methods, which may introduce bias into our sample. Additionally, there might be concerns related to confidentiality when participants refer others to the study, potentially compromising the privacy of respondents (Johnson, 2014). Therefore, while we leverage the advantages of snowball sampling, we remain vigilant about these limitations, implementing strategies to mitigate their potential impact.

For this particular study, our focus lies on 163 government employees hailing from East Java, Indonesia all holding the status of permanent employees. In order to maintain data integrity and precision, the researcher has thoughtfully incorporated screening questions at the inception of the questionnaire. These questions serve a dual purpose: firstly, to ascertain whether respondents align with the specific criteria outlined by the researcher, and secondly, to discern the appropriateness or lack thereof of the data provided by the respondents, thereby ensuring that the dataset employed in this study remains relevant and valid. Additionally, calculating the average of descriptive statistical data is essential in data analysis because it provides a central picture of the data distribution, allowing comparisons between variables. Relevant data is shown in the table below.

Table 1. Demographic Analysis

Age	N	%	Total
24-34 years	49	30%	163 (100%)
35-44 years	47	29%	
45-54 years	54	33%	
55-57 years	13	8%	
Education			
High School	30	18%	163 (100%)
Bachelor's Degree	92	56%	
Master's Degree	34	21%	
Doctoral Degree	7	4%	
Employment Status			
Civil Servant	138	85%	163 (100%)
PPPK (Contractual Staffs)	25	15%	

Source: Adapted Smartpls Output (2023)

RESULTS

This study presents the initial model quality investigation by validity testing, with a rule of no loading exceeds 0.70. Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) should be higher than 0.50. These steps necessitate a deletion of several items for not satisfactory scores. Further test results can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Validity Test

Items	Organizational Justice	Employee Cynicism	Trust	AVE
X1	0,763			
X3	0,708			0,733
X8	0,757			
X9	0,783			
Y1		0,860		
Y2		0,830		
Y3		0,900		0,567
Y4		0,834		
Z4			0,741	
Z6			0,791	
Z7			0,859	0,654
Z8			0,839	

Source: Smartpls Data Processed (2023)

The validity test results in Table 1 reveals that all indicators of organizational justice, trust, and employee cynicism are valid. These indicators have values above 0.70, indicating their convergent validity. Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are also satisfactorily above 0.50. Table 3 presents the key take away in the factor analysis for reliability by the measures of Cronbach's alpha and Composite reliability.

Table 3. Reliability Test

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Employee Cynicism	0,879	0,917
Organizational Justice	0,746	0,840
Trust	0,825	0,883

Source: Smartpls Data Processed (2023)

In the context of the reliability assessment, Table 2 demonstrates that Cronbach's alpha values surpass 0.70, signifying a substantial degree of dependability. This implies that the measurements employed in the study consistently capture the fundamental constructs, hence yielding dependable outcomes. A high value of Cronbach's alpha signifies a strong level of internal consistency among the items within each construct, hence influencing the level of trust in the reliability of the assessment. This study proceeds with further inner model analysis for hypothesis investigation. The bootstrapping procedure allows the significance test as compiled in Table 4.

Table 4. The Hypothesis Paths

Paths	Effect size	St. Dev.	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Organizational Justice -> Employee Cynicism	-0,479	0,067	7,204	0,000
Trust -> Employee Cynicism	-0,212	0,094	2,263	0,024
Organizational Justice -> Trust -> Employee Cynicism	-0,126	0,060	2,101	0,036

Source: Data Processed (2023)

The data presented in Table 4 indicates a notable correlation between organizational justice and employee cynicism. The claim is substantiated by the statistical examination, which demonstrates a t-statistic of 7.204 and a p-value of 0.05. An inverse relationship is observed between organizational fairness and employee cynicism, as indicated by the negative coefficient. Similarly, the t-statistic value of 2.263 and p-value of 0.05 obtained in the second hypothesis provide evidence of a statistically significant relationship between higher levels of trust and lower levels of cynicism. This study demonstrate that trust mediates organizational justice and employee cynicism with t-value > 1.96 and p-values < 0.05 show that trust significantly moderates the link between organizational fairness and employee cynicism. These findings suggest that trust is key in influencing employee cynicism through organizational justice. Employees who see fairness in the organization are more likely to trust management and current decision-making procedures. When there is a lack of organizational justice, employees' faith in the company might decrease, leading to increased skepticism.

DISCUSSION

In light of the statistical findings, it becomes clear that a robust and substantive relationship of significant import exists between the construct of organizational justice and the pervasive issue of employee cynicism confirming hypothesis 1. This result reinforces the findings from previous-scholar endeavors (Shaharruddin et al., 2016; Turgut et al., 2016). Evidently, the data elucidate that an upward trajectory in employees' perceived levels of organizational fairness corresponds inversely with the prevalence and intensity of cynicism within the workforce. This consequential outcome underscores the profound implication that an organizational milieu wherein employees perceive procedural and process fairness engenders a palpable reduction in the cynicism they manifest, thereby fostering a workplace environment characterized by positivity and cooperation.

Given the compelling insights gleaned from our research, there arises an urgent imperative for organizations to underscore the pivotal importance of attending to the dimension of organizational justice within their work environments. The research findings underscore the pivotal importance of implementing strategies aimed at enhancing and fortifying organizational justice, as underscored by Taxman and Gordon (2009). These initiatives can yield substantial dividends by effectively curtailing the incidence of employee cynicism and, in turn, contributing to the cultivation of an environment marked by harmonious relations and mutual trust. Such measures may encompass the meticulous establishment of fair policies and procedures, the transparent adjudication of decisions, and the unwavering commitment to ensuring the equitable and uniform treatment of all employees, thereby effecting a transformative shift toward a more salutary and positive workplace ambiance.

The results of this study emphasize the considerable impact of trust on employee cynicism within the framework of a company for hypothesis 2. Trust, an essential element of interpersonal connections, has a significant role in influencing employees' views and attitudes towards their work environment (Matzler & Renzl, 2006). Trust is a foundation for positive interactions and

cooperation between employees and their colleagues, supervisors, and the organization (Kaliappan & Kavitha, 2019). This, in turn, reduces the likelihood of developing cynicism, characterized by negative beliefs, skepticism, and a lack of trust in the organization.

Trust plays a crucial role in establishing a conducive atmosphere inside a business, when principles such as transparent communication, collaborative efforts, and equitable practices are actively encouraged. Employees that possess a high level of confidence in their organization are inclined to perceive management choices and actions as legitimate and ethical, hence mitigating the likelihood of cynicism (Mayer & Gavin, 2005). Furthermore, trust guards against cynicism by encouraging positive job attitudes including job satisfaction and organizational dedication. Employees are more likely to have a feeling of connection and loyalty when they trust their firm, further decreasing cynicism (Neves & Eisenberger, 2012). These findings have important implications for organizations seeking to address employee cynicism. Building trust within the workplace should be a priority, as it contributes to a positive work environment and reduces the likelihood of cynicism among employees (Singh & Srivastava, 2013). Strategies such as promoting transparency, fairness, and effective communication can help foster trust and mitigate cynicism.

The present study enhances our understanding of the intermediary function of trust in the association between organizational fairness and employee cynicism. The results indicate that trust significantly mitigates the influence of organizational justice on employee cynicism, suggesting that trust plays a crucial role in shaping the perspectives and attitudes of personnel. The fairness of procedures, relationships, and outcomes is referred to as organizational justice. Employees who believe the business and its management are fair in these areas are more inclined to trust the organization and its management (Kickul et al., 2005). Trust, in turn, acts as a buffer against cynicism by fostering positive beliefs, expectations, and cooperation among employees (Ferres et al., 2004; Singh & Srivastava, 2013).

Through the establishment of trust, public agency have the ability to cultivate an atmosphere wherein workers have a sense of worth, respect, and equitable treatment (Kaliappan & Kavitha, 2019). This, in turn, reduces the likelihood of cynicism among employees who might otherwise become disillusioned, disengaged, or display negative attitudes. These findings have practical implications for organizations aiming to improve employee well-being and organizational performance. Firstly, it highlights the importance of fostering a culture of fairness and transparency to enhance trust levels (Behazad, 2020; Schabram & Robinson, 2015). Organizations should prioritize equitable decision-making practices, resource allocation, and performance evaluations (Monachou & Stoica, 2022). Secondly, efforts should be made to enhance communication channels and build positive relationships between management and employees.

The presence of trust within an organization can mitigate the development of cynicism among employees. Trust is a protective factor, fostering positive perceptions and reducing negative attitudes (Kesharwani & Bisht, 2012). Organizations prioritizing trust-building initiatives are likely to see benefits in

increased employee satisfaction, engagement, and overall organizational effectiveness.

FURTHER STUDY

The present study has yielded significant findings about the correlation between organizational justice, trust, and employee cynicism within the context of government officials in East Java, Indonesia. Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge a number of constraints within the framework of these study outcomes.

The first limitation is the limited geographical coverage restricted to the East Java region. In further studies, expanding the geographical scope by involving respondents from other regions in Indonesia or other countries could enhance the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, using quantitative methodology in this research, while providing strong quantitative data, does not allow for a deep understanding of individual contexts and experiences. Therefore, further research may consider a qualitative approach to explore the perceptions and experiences of individuals regarding organizational justice, trust, and employee cynicism in greater depth.

It is crucial to bear in mind that employee cynicism is a multifaceted phenomenon that is shaped by a multitude of factors, encompassing both human and contextual elements that were not explored within the scope of this particular study. Further researches may consider additional factors affecting employee cynicism, such as leadership, organizational culture, or economic conditions.

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