

## The Effects of Distributive and Interactional Justice on The Dysfunctional Behavior of Millennials

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**Abstract:** *Experimental studies related to the effects of perceived justice on dysfunctional behavior have not been widely conducted. Studies related to fair treatment within organizations and its impact on dysfunctional aspects within organizations are relatively rare, especially considering the specific impact of organizational justice configuration patterns on dysfunctional behavior. The purpose of this study is to specifically examine the effects of distributive justice (DJ) and interactional justice (IJ) in various contexts and their impact on dysfunctional behavior. The study uses millennial subjects to gain an understanding of the attitudes and behaviors of this generation in responding to distributive and interactional justice. An experimental study was conducted to obtain artificial situations in four justice situations, namely high DJ - high IJ, high DJ – low IJ, low DJ – high IJ, and low DJ - low IJ. The results show that the interaction of distributive justice and interactional justice has a different impact on dysfunctional behavior, and millennials tend to be more concerned about welfare than interactional aspects.*

**Keywords:** *Distributive Justice, Interactional Justice, Dysfunctional, Millennials Generation*

**JEL:** D23, J21, M54

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Research on behaviors that are not expected by organizations, such as dysfunctional behaviors within organizations, still requires further exploration in terms of internal validation and contextual enrichment. In fact, studies from the dysfunctional perspective can enrich studies on building organizational effectiveness from a different angle. Unfair management behavior is the main cause of dysfunctional behavior within organizations (Skarlicky & Folger, 1997; Skarlicky et al., 1999). A meta-analysis conducted by Hartman et al. (1999) shows that studies of fairness are conducted in specific situations, namely situations of injustice, so that their impact on the consequences does not describe a comprehensive conceptual framework.

Tjahjono (2011; 2015) conducted a study on a number of organizational fairness configurations through experimental studies. The manipulation carried out in the study was to design the effects of various situations of distributive justice and procedural justice on the consequences, in this case, job satisfaction and affective commitment. The various situations in the study were management that was perceived as (1) distributively and procedurally fair, (2) distributively fair but procedurally unfair, (3) interactionally fair but procedurally unfair, and (4) distributively and procedurally unfair. These various situations had never been studied in the opposite situation, namely negative attitudes and behavior in the workplace. In this study, procedural justice is viewed as an integral part of the formal distributive justice group. This study aims to add to the study of the social aspect of justice, namely interpersonal justice. Therefore, the first issue of this study is the importance of including the configuration of distributive justice and interactional justice in explaining retaliatory behavior within organizations.

The second issue in this study relates to demographic diversity, in this case the presence of

millennials in the workplace. Millennials are seen as a creative, multitasking generation that is tech-savvy and values diversity, but there is a tendency for them to be less mentally resilient and less obedient to superiors and management. This is interesting because currently, millennials are generally at the lower management level, with only a few at the middle management level, where they are confronted with values that are generally different from those embraced by millennials. The question is how millennials retaliate in response to what they perceive as fair management.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Distributive justice is the oldest concept of justice that predicts employee attitudes and behavior within an organization. This justice is perceptual justice regarding the allocation of outcomes such as employee compensation and careers. Meanwhile, interactional justice is the social aspect of justice related to employee perceptions of respectful treatment and honesty of management information (Colquitt, 2001).

Based on social exchange theory, studies of justice play an important role in explaining outcomes within organizations. Meta-analysis studies explain that organizational justice, particularly distributive justice, has a strong effect on a number of organizational outcomes (Colquitt, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001; Sweeney & McFarlin, 1993; Tjahjono, 2010; 2011). These outcomes can be negative, such as retaliatory behavior, which is a form of revenge by employees against the organization (Appelbaum et al., 2007; Baron & Neuman, 1996; Giacalone & Greenberg, 1997; O'Leary et al. 1996). Meanwhile, a number of empirical studies have shown that organizational justice, particularly distributive justice, has a negative effect on retaliatory behavior (Skarlicky & Folger, 1997; Tjahjono, 2008; Palupi, 2013 and Palupi et al., 2014; Palupi & Tjahjono, 2016; 2019). Robinson & Bennett, 1995). However, interactional justice also plays a role in reducing disappointment and the urge to engage in retaliatory behavior.

Studies conducted by Tjahjono (2011 and 2014) show that various types of justice form configurations in explaining attitudes and behavior. According to Kinicki and Fugate (2003), millennials are more likely to value fairness, meaningful work, and participative leadership, and they tend to respond more critically to perceived injustice in organizational settings.

The interaction between distributive justice and interactional justice has a negative effect on retaliatory behavior in different ways in various situations. Specifically, the hypotheses in this study are:

H1: Distributive justice and interactional justice play a role in explaining retaliatory behavior.

H2: Distributive justice plays a more dominant role than interactional justice in explaining retaliatory behavior.

H3: Millennials are more pragmatic in their choice of distributive justice than interactional justice in relation to the impact of retaliatory behavior.

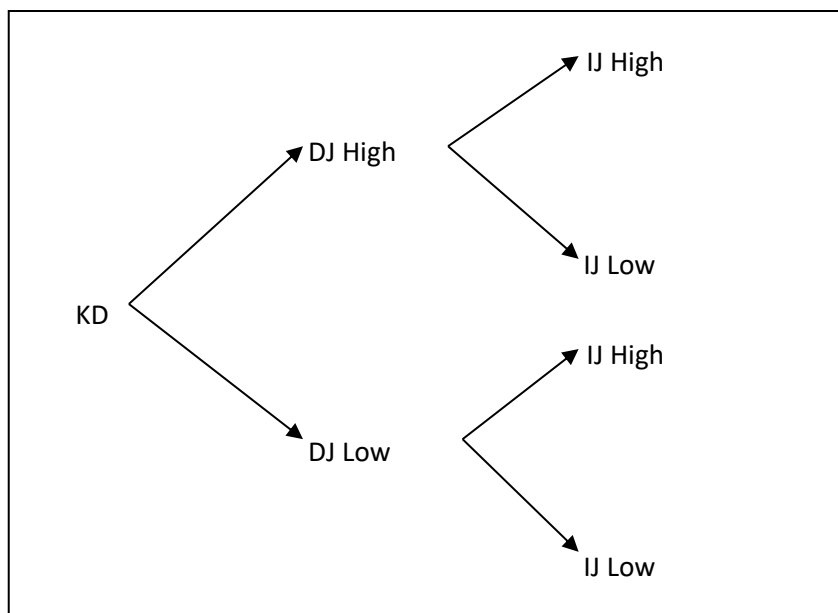
## **3. METHOD**

The research was conducted using an experimental study by creating four configurations of fairness situations, namely: (1) high distributive fairness and high interactional fairness; (2) high distributive fairness and low interactional fairness; (3) low distributive justice and high interactional justice; (4) low distributive justice and low procedural justice.

Group assignment was conducted through randomization. The research subjects consisted of 34 master's students who were treated with within-subject design, meaning that each student received four treatments on different days. They listened to case narratives read by facilitators who had the ability to engage students in the narratives being read. The cases involved students as employees within an organization who received distributive justice and interactional justice in four different situations presented on different days. The learning effect is likely to be minimal because the narrated cases were different and were conditioned through discussions with a research assistant who is also a professional psychology student

Next, students were asked to respond to a questionnaire containing items to test whether they received fair distributive and interactional treatment. This test was a check on the manipulation carried out in the experimental study. After that, students responded to a questionnaire containing their tendency to retaliate after receiving treatment delivered by the facilitator. Finally, a descriptive

test was conducted on the mean response of retaliatory behavior in various configurations of distributive and interactional justice that they perceived. To complete the experiment, interviews were conducted with three subjects related to high, medium, and low retaliatory behavior. The experimental design was as follows:



**Figure 1. Experimental Design - 2x2 Factorial**

Source: Research elaboration (2026)

The manual stages of the activity are shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Activity Manual for Days 1 to 4**

No	Agenda	Description
1	Introduction	Introduction of instructor names Explanation of activities
2	Manipulation	Manipulation of distributive justice & interactional justice through storytelling Storytelling Story in session I High DJ - High IJ Story in session II High DJ - Low IJ Story in session III Low DJ- High IJ Story in session IV Low DJ - Low IJ Check manipulation in each session
3	Kuesioner & Debriefing	Filling out the retaliation questionnaire in each session debriefing

Source: Research Data Processing (2026)

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the manipulation check are as follows:

**Table 2. Distributive Justice Manipulation Check**

KD	Description
High	N=68; Mean = 18.74 ; SD = 1.410
Low	N=68; Mean = 5.24 ; SD = 1.556

Source: Research Data Processing (2026)

**Table 3. Check for manipulations of interactional justice**

KI	Description
High	N=68; Mean = 17.81 ; SD = 3.004
Low	N=68; Mean = 5.54 ; SD = 1.749

Source: Research Data Processing (2026)

#### Dysfunctional Behavior

**Table 4. Retaliatory Behavioral Responses to Fairness Situation Configurations**

KD	KI	Mean	SD	N
High	High	9.2353	2.58268	34
	Low	13.7647	3.03470	34
Low	High	10.7059	3.24298	34
	Low	26.5000	4.41626	34

Source: Research Data Processing (2026)

Scale:

Very low: 7 - 12.59

Low: 12.6 - 18.19

Moderate: 18.2 - 23.79

High: 23.8 - 29.39

Very high: 29.4 – 35

The results of the study in Table 3 show that there is an interaction between distributive justice and interactional justice in explaining retaliatory behavior. Specifically, in situations of high distributive justice and high interactional justice, the tendency for retaliatory behavior will decrease. The retaliation scale is at a very low level (9.2353). Theoretically, formal policies that are perceived as distributively fair by subjects have fulfilled the transactional needs to achieve well-being within the organization. These policies are supported by interactional justice, which demonstrates respect and honesty in the information provided by management, further reducing the tendency of subjects to engage in retaliatory behavior.

Meanwhile, in situations of high distributive justice and low interactional justice, there is an increase in the tendency for retaliation, although the scale of retaliation remains low (13.7647). At the very least, from the perspective of formal company policy, it is perceived as fair, thereby fulfilling the subject's goal of obtaining welfare. The low aspect of interactional justice related to respectful treatment and low information honesty is perceived as not very important. This also shows that procedural justice is more dominant.

Meanwhile, in situations of low distributive justice and high interactional justice, the retaliation scale remains very low (10.7059). Numerically, this condition is more favorable than situations characterized by low distributive justice and low interactional justice; however, it is still lower than situations of high distributive justice and high interactional justice. This indicates the dominance of

distributive justice for the subject.

When distributive justice and interactional justice are low, the scale of retaliation tends to increase relatively high to a score of (26.5000). Theoretically, it is clear that subjects do not get the expected transactions with organizations such as fair welfare. This is exacerbated by disrespectful and dishonest treatment from the social aspect, which reinforces the tendency for subjects to become increasingly disappointed, thus encouraging retaliatory behavior.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

### **CONCLUSION**

Experimental studies have shown that distributive justice and interactional justice play a role in explaining retaliatory behavior. Specifically, there is an interaction between distributive justice and interactional justice in explaining retaliatory behavior. However, distributive justice plays a more dominant role. The results of interviews with three subjects support the above experimental study, showing that millennials tend to be more pragmatic when joining a company. Welfare motives still dominate over social aspects in the workplace, but compensation and career prospects are important to them if they are considered challenging. Zwiech (2024) and Moon et al. (2024) confirm that perceptions of justice (particularly distributive and procedural) significantly influence negative behavior, especially among the younger generation.

Du et al. (2024) showed that poor interpersonal treatment increases retaliation through emotional distress. This supports why low interactional justice conditions in this experimental study elicited higher retaliation. Chen et al. (2024) showed that interactional justice increases job satisfaction, thereby becoming a mechanism that suppresses retaliation.

“There remains a potential learning effect, despite efforts to control it by presenting different narrated cases. This study uses the millennial generation as its population. The study becomes more challenging going forward if comparisons are made between millennials and Generation X or even baby boomers. Comparisons between generations are interesting, especially the more dramatic differences, with frequent misunderstandings between millennials and baby boomers.

### **SUGGESTION**

Furthermore, future studies should consider other demographic aspects relevant to the workplace context. For example, gender and personality aspects have significant potential to yield new findings in studies of fairness and retaliatory behavior.

The involvement of a more comprehensive aspect of justice by including variables of procedural justice, interpersonal justice, and informational justice is important to consider in certain research contexts. For example, the presence of interpersonal justice and informational justice is more meaningful in situations of high distributive and procedural injustice.

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