

Organisational Justice as Determinant of Perceived Career Success among Female Academics in Higher Institutions in South-West Nigeria

*Abimbola Mary Bankole¹

ambankole@ekspoly.edu.ng

<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-7297-1553>

Retta Akingbade²

akingbade.retta@lcu.edu.ng

Department of Psychology, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Lead City University,
Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study examined organisational justice as a determinant of perceived career success among female academics in higher institutions in South-West Nigeria. Specifically, it assessed the relative influence of distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice on perceived career success. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, and data was collected from 319 female academics in selected public and private universities in Oyo, Osun, and Ekiti States using structured questionnaires. Findings showed that organisational justice significantly predicted perceived career success. Out of the four organisational justice dimensions, distributive justice was the strongest predictor, followed by interpersonal justice, while procedural and informational justice did not significantly predict perceived career success. In summary, fair organisational outcomes and respectful interpersonal treatment are central to female academics' perceptions of career success. It recommends that higher institutions strengthen equitable access to promotions, research opportunities, leadership roles, professional recognition, and respectful workplace relationships to enhance female academics' career development.*

Keywords: organisational justice. perceived career success, female academics, higher education, South-West Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Career success is commonly associated with observable achievements such as promotion, academic rank, salary progression, and professional recognition. However, these objective

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indicators do not fully explain how individuals evaluate their professional progress. Perceived career success reflects an individual's subjective assessment of achievement, growth, recognition, fulfilment, and progress toward personally valued career goals. In academic institutions, such evaluations are shaped not only by individual competence and productivity but also by organisational experiences that communicate fairness, respect, recognition, and support (Kim & Beehr, 2023; Nadiri & Tanova, 2022). Organisational justice provides an important framework for understanding these experiences.

Organisational justice refers to employees' perceptions of fairness in organisational outcomes, decision-making procedures, interpersonal treatment, and communication (Greenberg, 1987; Colquitt, 2001). The four dimensions of organisational justice which are distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice represent distinct aspects of workplace fairness. Distributive justice concerns the fairness of outcomes such as promotion, workload allocation, leadership opportunities, research support, and professional recognition. Procedural justice concerns the fairness and transparency of the processes used to make organisational decisions. Interpersonal justice reflects the degree to which employees are treated with dignity and respect, while informational justice concerns the adequacy and honesty of explanations provided about organisational decisions (Colquitt, 2001).

The relationship between organisational justice and perceived career success is particularly relevant for female academics in higher institutions. Academic career progression depends on research productivity, teaching effectiveness, service, promotion systems, institutional recognition, access to leadership roles, and supportive professional relationships. Although higher institutions are expected to promote merit and equity, female academics may encounter organisational conditions that influence how they interpret their career development (Liu et al., 2024). Fair access to opportunities, transparent procedures, respectful treatment, and clear communication may therefore shape how female academics evaluate their own professional success.

Previous research has linked organisational justice with job satisfaction, organisational commitment, trust, engagement, well-being, and other workplace outcomes (Alzoubi et al., 2023; Gomes & Marques, 2025). However, less attention has been given to how the different dimensions of organisational justice contribute to perceived career success, especially among female academics in Nigerian higher education. Treating organisational justice as a single construct may obscure differences in the psychological relevance of its dimensions. It is therefore necessary to examine whether distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice contribute equally to female academics' perceptions of career success.

This study examined organisational justice as a determinant of perceived career success among female academics in higher institutions in South-West Nigeria. Specifically, it assessed the relative influence of distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice on perceived career

success. By focusing on the independent contribution of each justice dimension, the study provides evidence on the forms of organisational fairness that are most relevant to female academics' career evaluations and offers practical insight for higher institutions seeking to promote equitable career development.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Organisational Justice Theory and Social Exchange Theory. Organisational Justice Theory explains how employees form perceptions of fairness in relation to organisational outcomes, decision-making procedures, interpersonal treatment, and communication (Greenberg, 1987; Colquitt, 2001). These dimensions are relevant to academic careers because progression in higher institutions is affected by decisions on promotion, research support, workload allocation, leadership opportunities, recognition, and access to professional development.

Perceived career success is treated as a subjective evaluation rather than a purely objective career outcome. It reflects how academics assess their professional growth, recognition, fulfilment, and progress towards valued goals. From this perspective, career success is shaped not only by formal achievements such as rank or promotion but also by the meanings employees attach to organisational experiences. Fair outcomes may communicate recognition of contribution, while respectful interpersonal treatment may communicate dignity and professional value.

Organisational Justice Theory therefore provides the basis for distinguishing four fairness dimensions. Distributive justice concerns the perceived fairness of outcomes received by academics. Procedural justice concerns the fairness and consistency of the processes used to make institutional decisions. Interpersonal justice concerns the extent to which academics are treated with respect, dignity, and courtesy. Informational justice concerns the adequacy, honesty, and timeliness of explanations provided about decisions. Although related, these dimensions represent different psychological experiences and may not contribute equally to career evaluation.

Social Exchange Theory complements this explanation by showing why fairness perceptions influence career-related evaluations (Blau, 1964). Employment relationships involve reciprocal exchanges in which employees contribute effort, expertise, loyalty, teaching, research, and service, while institutions provide opportunities, recognition, support, and respectful treatment. When female academics perceive these exchanges as fair, they are more likely to view their careers as meaningful and successful. Conversely, perceived unfairness may weaken confidence in institutional recognition and career progress.

The theoretical model guiding this study proposes that distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice serve as independent predictors of perceived career success. Distributive justice is expected to influence career success by signalling institutional recognition of academic contribution, while interpersonal justice is expected to operate through professional respect and

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dignity. Procedural and informational justice are expected to support confidence in institutional systems, although their direct influence on perceived career success may differ from the influence of outcome fairness and interpersonal treatment. Based on these theories and findings from reviewed literature, the following hypotheses were tested:

Hypotheses 1: Distributive justice will significantly and positively predict perceived career success among female academics in higher institutions in South-West Nigeria.

Hypotheses 2: Interpersonal justice will significantly and positively predict perceived career success among female academics in higher institutions in South-West Nigeria.

Hypotheses 3: Procedural justice will significantly and positively predict perceived career success among female academics in higher institutions in South-West Nigeria.

Hypotheses 4: Informational justice will significantly and positively predict perceived career success among female academics in higher institutions in South-West Nigeria.

METHOD

Study design and setting

A cross-sectional survey design was used to examine the relationship between organisational justice dimensions and perceived career success among female academics in higher institutions in South-West Nigeria. The study was conducted in selected public and private universities in Oyo, Osun, and Ekiti States. The design was appropriate because data was collected from participants at a single point in time and the study examined naturally occurring relationships among variables without experimental manipulation.

Population, sample and sampling procedure

A multistage sampling procedure was adopted. First, three states were selected from the six states in South-West Nigeria using simple random sampling. Second, universities in each selected state were stratified into public and private institutions, after which one public and one private university were randomly selected from each state. Third, female academics in the selected institutions formed the sampling frame, and simple random sampling was used to select respondents according to the proportionate sample allocated to each institution.

The study population comprised 1,568 female academic staff members employed in six selected universities in South-West Nigeria. The sample size was determined using Yamane's formula for finite populations (Yamane, 1967), producing a final sample of 319 respondents who completed the study questionnaire.

Measures

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire comprising measures of perceived career success and organisational justice. Perceived career success was measured using the Perceived

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Career Success Scale, which assesses subjective evaluation of career accomplishment, professional growth, recognition, and overall career progress. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, with higher scores indicating higher perceived career success.

Organisational justice was measured using Colquitt's Organisational Justice Scale, which assesses distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice (Colquitt, 2001). The scale measures employees' perceptions of fairness in organisational outcomes, decision-making procedures, interpersonal treatment, and communication. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating stronger perceptions of organisational justice.

A pilot test was conducted to establish the psychometric properties of the measures. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The organisational justice scale showed excellent reliability ($\alpha = .934$), and the perceived career success scale also showed excellent reliability ($\alpha = .948$).

Procedure

Data was collected using both physical and online questionnaire administration. Printed questionnaires were distributed to respondents in the selected universities, while an online version was shared through Google Forms to reach participants who were not available for in-person completion. Participants received information on the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the estimated time required to complete the questionnaire.

Completed questionnaires were screened for completeness before coding and analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarise participant characteristics and study variables. Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine bivariate relationships among the variables. Multiple linear regression analysis was then used to test the predictive effects of distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice on perceived career success. Statistical significance was evaluated at the .05 level.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was obtained before data collection. Participants were informed of the study objectives, their right to decline participation or withdraw without penalty, and the confidentiality of their responses. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and no identifying information was reported. The data were used solely for research purposes.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics and correlations

Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficients were computed for perceived career success and the four dimensions of organisational justice. The results are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for study variables

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
<i>Distributive Justice</i>	319	4.065	0.856	-0.631	-0.563
<i>Procedural Justice</i>	319	3.408	0.965	-0.165	-0.518
<i>Interpersonal Justice</i>	319	3.767	0.958	-0.612	0.109
<i>Informational Justice</i>	319	3.308	1.033	-0.328	-0.475
	319	3.646	0.773	-0.306	-0.140
Organisational Justice (Overall)					
Perceived Career Success	319	4.067	0.519	-0.664	0.655

Note. All variables were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = low, 5 = high).

Table 1 shows that all variables recorded mean scores above the scale midpoint, indicating generally favourable perceptions of organisational justice and perceived career success. Distributive justice had the highest mean, while informational justice had the lowest, suggesting stronger perceptions of outcome fairness than communication fairness. Skewness and kurtosis values were within acceptable limits, supporting the use of parametric tests.

Table 2. Pearson correlations among study variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Distributive Justice	.129*	.329**	-					
2. Procedural Justice	.275**	.159**	.544**	-				
3. Interpersonal Justice	.326**	.071	.279**	.562**	-			
4. Informational Justice	.417**	-.030	.425**	.705**	.714**	-		
5. Organisational Justice (Overall)	.298**	.127*	.682**	.907**	.755**	.871**	-	
6. Perceived Career Success			.574**	.408**	.415**	.494**	.540**	-

*Note. **p < .01, *p < .05 (2-tailed).*

Table 2 indicates significant positive correlations between perceived career success and all organisational justice dimensions. Distributive justice showed the strongest association, followed by overall organisational justice and informational justice. The intercorrelations among justice dimensions were expected because they are components of a broader justice construct.

Regression analysis

Multiple linear regression was used to determine the extent to which distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice predicted perceived career success. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Multiple regression of organisational justice dimensions on perceived career success

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	T	P
Distributive	0.267	0.029	0.497	9.113	< .001
Procedural	-0.027	0.033	-0.056	-0.807	0.420
Interpersonal	0.097	0.031	0.205	3.103	0.002
Informational	0.051	0.035	0.111	1.476	0.141

Note. $N = 319$. $R = 0.623$, $R^2 = 0.389$, $Adjusted\ R^2 = 0.380$, $F(4, 314) = 47.056$, $p < .001$.
Dependent Variable: Perceived Career Success.

The regression model was significant, $F(4, 314) = 47.056$, $p < .001$, and explained **38.9%** of the variance in perceived career success.

Among the predictors, **distributive justice** was the strongest significant predictor of perceived career success ($\beta = .497$, $t = 9.113$, $p < .001$), followed by **interpersonal justice** ($\beta = .205$, $t = 3.103$, $p = .002$). **Procedural justice** and **informational justice** were not significant predictors after controlling for the other dimensions.

Overall, the results show that organisational justice significantly predicted perceived career success, with distributive justice and interpersonal justice making significant independent contributions.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings show that organisational justice is an important context for understanding perceived career success among female academics. However, the dimensions did not contribute equally: distributive and interpersonal justice were significant predictors, while procedural and informational justice were not. This suggests that female academics evaluate career success more strongly through experiences that communicate recognition, fairness of outcomes, dignity, and respect.

Organisational Justice as a Psychological Context for Career Evaluation

The joint effect of the four justice dimensions indicates that career success is shaped not only by objective achievements but also by how employees interpret fairness within their institutions. This supports Organisational Justice Theory and Social Exchange Theory, which emphasise fairness, reciprocity, recognition, and perceived organisational value (Blau, 1964; Greenberg, 1987; Colquitt, 2001).

H1: Distributive justice will significantly and positively predict perceived career success among female academics in higher institutions in South-West Nigeria.

Distributive justice emerged as the strongest predictor of perceived career success. This implies that female academics attach considerable importance to fair access to promotion, research support, leadership opportunities, professional recognition, and other career-related outcomes. Fair outcomes communicate that the institution recognises employees' competence and effort. In the academic context, this recognition strengthens confidence that career progress is merit-based and professionally meaningful. This finding reinforces previous evidence linking distributive justice with career satisfaction, organisational commitment, and employee engagement commitment (Anjum et al., 2018; Kim & Beehr 2023; Nadiri & Tanova, 2022).

H2: Interpersonal justice will significantly and positively predict perceived career success among female academics in higher institutions in South-West Nigeria. Interpersonal justice also significantly predicted perceived career success. Respectful treatment from heads of department, deans, colleagues, and administrators communicates dignity, inclusion, and professional value, all of which strengthen positive career evaluation. This finding is important in universities, where teaching, research, supervision, committee work, and leadership depend heavily on interpersonal relationships. Respectful interaction therefore functions as a form of social validation that supports professional identity and career confidence. The findings are in tandem to previous research findings linking interpersonal justice with career outcomes (Loi et al 2022; Rasool et al 2023).

H3: Procedural justice will significantly and positively predict perceived career success among female academics in higher institutions in South-West Nigeria.

H4: Informational justice will significantly and positively predict perceived career success among female academics in higher institutions in South-West Nigeria.

Another important finding of the present study was that procedural justice and informational justice did not make significant independent contributions to perceived career success after controlling for the remaining dimensions of organisational justice. At first glance, this finding appears inconsistent with the broader organisational justice literature, which has frequently identified procedural and informational justice as important predictors of positive workplace attitudes. However, a closer examination suggests that these dimensions may influence career evaluation differently from distributive and interpersonal justice.

Procedural justice concerns employees' perceptions of the fairness of organisational decision-making processes, while informational justice relates to the adequacy and honesty of explanations accompanying organisational decisions. Both dimensions contribute to organisational legitimacy by strengthening employees' confidence in institutional governance and reducing uncertainty

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surrounding organisational actions. Nevertheless, the present findings suggest that these forms of fairness may be less influential when employees evaluate their own career success.

One possible explanation is that female academics distinguish between confidence in organisational systems and evaluation of personal career progress. Fair procedures may increase trust in institutional governance without necessarily convincing employees that their own careers are progressing successfully. Similarly, transparent communication may improve employees' understanding of organisational decisions without substantially altering how they evaluate their professional accomplishments. Consequently, procedural and informational justice may influence organisational attitudes such as trust, commitment, and organisational identification more directly than they influence perceived career success.

A second explanation relates to the multidimensional nature of organisational justice itself. Although distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice are conceptually distinct, they are also substantially interrelated. Employees rarely experience these dimensions independently. Organisational decisions generally involve procedures, outcomes, interpersonal treatment, and communication simultaneously. Consequently, when all four dimensions are entered into the same regression model, distributive and interpersonal justice may account for much of the variance that procedural and informational justice share with perceived career success. This statistical pattern does not imply that procedural and informational justice lack importance; rather, it suggests that their influence overlaps considerably with dimensions that communicate recognition more directly.

The findings also invite a broader psychological interpretation. Employees appear to evaluate career success primarily through organisational experiences that answer two fundamental questions: Does the organisation recognise my contribution? Am I treated as a valued professional? Distributive justice answers the first question through equitable organisational outcomes, while interpersonal justice answers the second through respectful interpersonal treatment. Procedural justice and informational justice, although essential for organisational functioning, do not communicate these messages as directly. Consequently, they may assume secondary importance when employees assess their own career success.

These findings should therefore not be interpreted as diminishing the value of fair procedures or transparent communication. Rather, they indicate that different justice dimensions fulfil different psychological functions within organisations. Procedural and informational justice may establish the institutional conditions necessary for fairness, whereas distributive and interpersonal justice provide the experiences through which employees evaluate their professional standing.

The present findings differ from some previous studies reporting direct positive associations between procedural justice, informational justice, and career-related outcomes (Okon et al., 2026; Rahman, 2024). However, they are consistent with more recent multidimensional approaches that

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reported non-significant influence of procedural and informational justice to career outcomes, suggesting that the influence of organisational justice depends on the outcome under investigation and the organisational context in which fairness is experienced (Lambert, 2026; Srivastava, 2015). The results therefore encourage researchers to move beyond treating organisational justice as a single construct and instead examine how individual justice dimensions contribute differently to specific psychological outcomes.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined organisational justice as a determinant of perceived career success among female academics in higher institutions in South-West Nigeria. The findings show that organisational justice significantly predicts perceived career success, but the four dimensions do not contribute equally. Distributive justice was the strongest predictor, followed by interpersonal justice, while procedural and informational justice did not make significant independent contributions when considered alongside the other dimensions.

The results indicate that female academics' perceptions of career success are strongly shaped by fairness in career-related outcomes and the quality of interpersonal treatment within their institutions. Fair access to promotion, research support, leadership opportunities, professional recognition, and other career-enhancing resources appears central to how female academics evaluate their professional progress. Respectful treatment, dignity, and professional regard also contribute meaningfully to positive career evaluation.

The study concludes that higher institutions seeking to strengthen female academics' perceived career success should give priority to equitable organisational outcomes and respectful workplace relationships. Transparent procedures and adequate communication remain important for institutional governance, but they are likely to be most effective when accompanied by fair outcomes and interpersonal respect. The findings therefore highlight the need for universities to strengthen fairness in promotion systems, workload allocation, research opportunities, professional recognition, leadership access, and everyday academic interactions.

Recommendations

- i. The finding highlights the importance of fostering respectful and inclusive interpersonal relationships within universities. Institutional efforts to improve female academics' career development and success should therefore pay attention not only to organisational policies but also to leadership behaviours and everyday interactions that communicate dignity, respect, and professional value.
- ii. Universities should continue to maintain transparent procedures and effective communication because these remain essential components of good governance.

iii. Institutions seeking to strengthen female academics' perceptions of career success should recognise that fair procedures alone are unlikely to be sufficient unless accompanied by equitable organisational outcomes and respectful interpersonal relationships.

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