

# ORGANISATIONAL JUSTICE AND RETENTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE EMPLOYEES IN LESS DEVELOPED ECONOMY

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**Abstract:** *The inequality that bedevilled most enterprises in less developed economies has resulted to the high turnover of administrative employees. Administrative employees are amongst the vehicles that assist organisations to convey their specific goals to the desired destinations. Thus, their retention is necessary for the smooth functioning of any formal organisation. It is against this backdrop that this research investigates the effect of organisational justice on retention of administrative employees in less developed economy using cross-sectional survey. Twenty small and medium enterprises were surveyed. Data were collected with copies of questionnaire. Linear regression was used to analyse formulated research hypotheses. Results of the study demonstrated that organisational justice has significant positive effect on retention of administrative employees. The study concluded that organisational justice enhances retention of administrative employees thus, recommended that organisational leaders should ensure that resources are evenly distributed within the workplace with equitable procedures as well as information dissemination.*

**Keywords:** *Organisational Justice, Equity Theory, Employee Retention, Administrative Employees*

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## INTRODUCTION

Retaining employees especially those in the administrative section of the organisation is very crucial for optimum performance. Administrative employees are essential workers that are saddled with the responsibilities of filling and documentation of vital information that keep the organisation alive. Therefore, for organisation to survive and make positive progress, such employees need to be retained. It is on this note that Chatzoudes and Chatzoglou (2022) stressed that retaining valued employees would contribute to organisational sustainability and enhance commitment. Sareen and Agarwal (2016) added that without retention, most businesses may not be able to render quality services to potential customers. Research has revealed that organisations or businesses that prioritised retention as one of their cultures would always perform better than their counterparts that are in the same industry (Chukwuemeka et al., 2023; Madurani & Pasaribu, 2021). Again, Madurani and Pasaribu (2021) opined that businesses or companies that have metamorphosed into conglomerate were able to grow

because of the employees they retained. Steil et al. (2020) argued that it is cost effective to retain employees than to allow them to leave. Khalid and Nawab (2018) suggested that administrators and managers can leverage on retention of their employees as a strategic advantage. It was the above argument that attracted Govaerts et al. (2011) to contend that any organisation that fails to retain their employees would pay for the recruitment of new ones and this is not always good for any progressive organisations. Steiner et al. (2020) contended that when administrative employees are retained, organisation also maintain stability and resilience.

Nevertheless, SME's enterprises in less developed economies faces myriad of challenges in retaining talented employees due to the general lack of recognition, poor employee compensation, lack of growth prospects for personnel, stiff competition from larger firms, poor managerial capabilities, leadership styles (Awolaja, 2023; Bikefe & Daniel, 2022; Sharanya, 2017) and cultural diversities within the region among others. These challenges are not only increasing administrative

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employees' turnover but equally encouraging voluntary quitting behaviour occasioned by inadequate training and development of personnel to face current realities of the time. Notwithstanding, Edeh et al. (2021a) strongly stated that retention is also dependent on the rate which superiors treat administrative employees equitably. Thus, unfair treatment can discourage employees from staying with a particular organisation and motivate their movement from one organisation to another. This is what gave Lambert et al. (2018) the energy to assert that inequality in terms of pay, resource allocation and information dissemination has created negative image for many companies in developing countries. Ouyang et al. (2015) remarked that when managers or administrators fail to administer resources equitably in the workplace, employees would feel being maltreated or marginalised. Edeh and Ugwu (2019) editorialised that workplace justice or organisational justice when properly implemented, could take care of inequality that has bedevilled most organisations in less developing economies. Some researchers also observed that fairness brings out the best effort of the employee, hence administrators or supervisors should ensure that equity prevails in their respective workplaces (Akram et al., 2016; Ajala, 2015). Organisational justice when deployed could discourage inequality in the organisation and thus, increase the retention rate of administrative employees. Survey has shown that companies or organisations encourages employee retention, commitment and increases job satisfaction (Karkoulian et al., 2016). Hence, it behoves on supervisors, administrators and managers to prevent high employee turnover through organisational justice.

Therefore, most studies on organisational justice such as Edeh and Ugwu (2019), Lambert et al. (2020), Shuaibu et al. (2021) and other scholars examined the effect or relationship between organisational justice and other dependent variable which is different from the current study. Although, few studies attempted to investigate how organisational justice could affect employee retention but none of them focused on small and medium enterprises in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. It was these gaps that motivated the researchers to carry out this investigation.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objective of this study is to investigate the effect of organisational justice on retention of administrative employees in selected SME's in Bayelsa State. Specifically, this research sought to:

- Examine the effect of distributive justice on the pay of administrative employees.

- Investigate the effect of procedural justice on the reward of administrative employees.
- Identify the effect of interactional justice on the work environment of administrative employees.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Organisational Justice

The term organisational justice (OJ) refers to the fairness of resource distribution, procedures and information sharing (Edeh & Ugwu, 2019). Percunda et al. (2020) perceived OJ as the ways through which managers administer equity in the organisation. Other scholars opined that OJ is concerned with the actions that promote equal influence of decision making (Edeh & Ofoegbu, 2017). OJ was also conceived as the bedrock for retaining administrative employees (Tambari, 2020). What is clear about OJ is that there is no consensus regarding its definition, hence equity and fairness are used interchangeably to mean decisions regarding outcome. Fatima et al. (2020) argues that since the workplace is made up of different administrative employees, it is expected that top-level management should treat workers equally. Lambert et al. (2020) suggested that fairness is what breeds accountability, transparency and loyalty therefore, when resources are to be distributed, superiors should do so equitably. Ghasi et al. (2020) stressed that in the case of where resources are not evenly distributed, management should not expect all the functional areas of organisation to produce the same result. One strong reason given as to why managers don't adhere to OJ is because of the fear of the unknown. Considerably, Edeh and Ofoegbu (2017) maintain that where there is injustice, administrative employees tend to exhibit certain counterproductive behaviour. Tambari (2020) assert that organisations that are willing to improve commitment of their employees should also deploy OJ. Some empirical studies were addressed in this section. Kim and Jeong (2021) examined the relationships between organisational justice and job performance as well as with empowerment and the outcome revealed that organisational justice predicted all the two criterion variables. Obalade and Mtembu (2023) results demonstrated organisational justice has very strong effect of workplace deviance in selected public universities in Nigeria. Other study results show that organisational justice has significant effect on the turnover intention in Potiskum (Shuaibu et al., 2021; Mengstie, 2020; Taofiq, 2020). Another finding show that organisational justice predicted job engagement and turnover intention (Zhuo et al., 2022). Ohiorenoya and Eguavoen (2019) result revealed that organisational justice significantly predicted

employee engagement in selected higher institutions located at Edo State in Nigeria. Edeh et al. (2021a) shows that organisational justice positively influenced human resource retention in the Nigerian public universities. Dike et al. (2021) findings revealed that organisational justice has positive significant effect on the performance of employees at the Anambra State Polytechnics.

### Retention of Administrative Employees

Retaining employees in the workplace is a major issue that has dominated management sciences scholars across the globe (Chukwuemeka et al., 2023; Zayed et al., 2022; Edeh et al., 2021a). Retention is the processes and procedures for keeping valued employees in the organisation. Jha (2019) defined the employee retention as the policies that management implement to retain their employees. Kundu and Lata (2017) stressed that employee retention is a strategy to retain employees that add positive value to their performance. Naz et al., (2020) opined that employee retention is any mechanism put in place by managers or administrators to reduce high employee turnover. It was observed that employees that contribute to the success of any organisation would not be happy to leave except when their organisation is not willing to provide necessary ingredients needed for them to stay. However, Sareen and Agarwal (2016) suggested that retaining an employee is the duty or responsibility of management that discovered such employee during the recruitment process. Steil et al. (2020) assume that the reason for retaining employees is to increase profitability and maintain leadership in the market. Steiner et al. (2020) added that in a situation where employees are committed to their work, management should reward them equitably. Employee retention also refers to those actions that are necessary for the prevention of employees from leaving the organisation (Khalid & Nawab, 2018). Human resource management policies aimed at motivating employees to perform their work better (Chatzoudes & Chatzoglou, 2022). Madurani and Pasaribu (2021) stated that to keep employees in the organisation, leaders of the organisation should ensure that the workplace is safe. Other researchers added that one factor retaining employees is pay (Govaerts et al., 2011), but Jha (2019) differs with the submissions above and admitted that the practice of retaining employees depend on the work environment. Other scholars have opined that reward is one of the strong indicators of employee retention (Naz et al., 2020). In this regard, Zayed et al. (2022) assert that in developed nations, what may be regarded as retention factors may be different from the developing economies. Thus, in developing economies, research has shown that pay, reward and work environment encourages employees

to stay with their organisations (Sareen & Agarwal, 2016). Meanwhile, Agyapong et al. (2019) advocated that keeping administrative employees could promote job specialisation that may lead to high profitability and effectiveness. Li et al. (2019) maintains that the issue of retaining administrative employees is to prevent them from taken the knowledge that they acquired to another organisation. Agyapong et al. (2019) argued that to discourage employee turnover, managers and supervisors need to ensure that there is equal distribution of organisational resources. Bussin and Mouton (2019) contributed by arguing that even in the public sector, employees can leave when they perceived injustice.

### Organisational Justice and Retention of Administrative Employees

Survey has shown that fairness brings about high performance of retained employees (Ghasi et al., 2020). Another study indicated that organisational justice predicts retention of employees (Fatima et al., 2020). This implies that administrative employees are essential to every organisation. Lambert et al. (2020) opined that administrative employees are the driving force of an enterprise and desire to be treated fairly to retain them. Edeh et al. (2021a) contended that it would be good if organisational administrations can utilise organisational justice as an instrument of change to retain their employees. On the one hand, Percunda et al. (2020) stated when there is a disparity in pay, employees tend to display negative work behaviour that has the capacity of reducing the image of the organisation. One factor that motivates an employee to stay in their workplaces is reward (Edeh et al., 2021b). Research has shown that when workers are not rewarded, they plan to quit their jobs with the hope of getting another one in different enterprises (Krishnamoorthy & Aisha, 2022). This evidence has given rise to poor performance, absenteeism, social loafing and low performance of employees (Tambari, 2020). Research on employee retention has demonstrated that work environment, pay and rewards contribute to employee retention in the developing economies (Ohunakin et al., 2019; Ambrosius, 2018). On another perspective, Edeh et al. (2021a) listed promotion, compensation and work environment as the factors that encourage employees to be retained in their workplaces. This is like the employee retention factors that were empirically investigated by Edeh et al. (2021b) where they enumerated co-worker support, supervisor support, work environment and pay. Therefore, this research adapted pay, reward and work environment as the dimensions of administrative employee retention in Nigeria. Drawing from the above contentions, the following research propositions were developed:

H1: Distributive justice predict the reward of administrative employees.

H2: Procedural justice predict the pay of administrative employees.

H3: Interactional justice predict the work environment of administrative employees.

## Theoretical Underpinning

The theoretical baseline that explains this research is equity theory which was propounded by Stacy Adams (Edeh & Ugwu, 2019). Equity theory states that individuals perceive fairness in relation with the outcome or reward received for performing their work (Jones & George, 2017) therefore, the premise of equity theory in this study is that when the management of enterprises treat administrative employees in an equitable manner, they would be retained.

## METHODOLOGY

Cross-sectional survey was employed in this research due to its applicability in short period collection of data with questionnaire (Ghuri et al., 2020). The questionnaire instruments used in this study were adapted from different sources. The instrument for organisational justice was adapted from the 14-items scale of Cheng (2014) which was validated and confirmed reliable by Adeniji et al. (2019) while the instrument for retention of administrative employees were adapted from Ambrosius (2018), Edeh et al. (2021b) and Ohunakin et al. (2019). The 12-items scale of retention was modified to suit the circumstances of this investigation. However, they were both revalidated and their individual outcome shows that organisational justice has (0.76; 0.81 and 0.72) for procedural justice, distributive justice and interactional justice while retention has (0.73; 0.77 and 0.78) for reward, pay and work environment respectively.

Target population includes SME's in Bayelsa State while the accessible population comprises of twenty SMEs using convenience sampling technique. Questionnaire was used to collect data from the administrative employees. Sample frame of 250 administrative employees was surveyed from the accessible population. Sample size of 152 was determined with Krejcie and Morgan (1970) from the sample frame. 152 questionnaires were distributed but 123 copies were filled correctly and found valid for analysis. Cronbach alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instrument while face validity was deployed to ascertain the validity of

the instrument. Ethical guidelines were followed during the collection of data. Thus, the consent of the participants was sought through an informed consent form which stipulates that the identities of the participants would not be revealed in the research as well as their respective enterprises. Linear regression was used to analyse the formulated research hypotheses with SPSS 22.0.

## RESULTS

**Table 1: Gender of Participants**

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Male	45	36.6	36.6	36.6
	Female	78	63.4	63.4	100.0
	Total	123	100.0	100.0	

Source: SPSS Output (2024).

The gender of the respondent in Table 1 above revealed that 45 administrative employees representing 36.6% are males while 78 of them that represent 63.4% are females which indicates that female administrative employees occupy most of the administrative jobs in the current study.

**Table 2: Age Bracket of Participants**

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	44 years & above	14	11.4	11.4	11.4
	34-43 years	46	37.4	37.4	48.8
	20-33 years	63	51.2	51.2	100.0
	Total	123	100.0	100.0	

Source: SPSS Output (2024).

The age bracket of the respondents in Table 2 shows that 14 of them representing 11.4% are within the ages of 44 years and above, 46 administrative employees representing 37.4% are within the ages of 34–43 years, 63 administrative employees representing 51.2% are within 20–33 years.

**Table 3: Educational Background of Participants**

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Secondary	58	47.2	47.2	47.2
	Others	18	14.6	14.6	61.8
	Master degree	10	8.1	8.1	69.9
	Bachelor degree	37	30.1	30.1	100.0
	Total	123	100.0	100.0	

Source: SPSS Output (2024).

The educational background of the participants indicated that 58 respondents that 47.2% are secondary school certificate holders, 18 respondents representing 14.8% hold other educational qualifications, 10 participants representing 8.1% hold master's degrees, 37 respondents that represent 30.1% hold bachelor degrees.

**Table 4: Working Experience of Participants**

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	11 years & above	25	20.3	20.3	20.3
	1-10 years	98	79.7	79.7	100.0
	Total	123	100.0	100.0	

Source: SPSS Output (2024).

The above table revealed that 25 participants representing 20.3% have been working as administrative employees for the past 11 years while 98 of them have been working as administrative employees from 1 to 10 years.

**Table 5: Test of Hypotheses**

R	.684 <sup>a</sup>	.741 <sup>a</sup>	.761 <sup>a</sup>
R <sup>2</sup>	.468	.548	.579
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.463	.545	.576
T-Stat.	10.311	12.124	12.908
F-Stat.	106.319	146.980	166.610
Std.Error	.054	.053	.053
d/f	3.91	3.91	3.91
Sig.	.000	.000	.000
N	123	123	123

Source: Researcher's computation (2024).

Results of the analysed hypotheses revealed that distributive justice has significant effect on reward (0.05<.000; .684<sup>a</sup>), procedural justice has significant effect on pay (0.05<.000; .741<sup>a</sup>), and interactional justice has significant effect on work environment (0.05<.000; .761<sup>a</sup>). Additionally, R<sup>2</sup> of the models indicated that 47%; 55% and 58% of the total variation in distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice can be explained by reward, pay and work environment. Another reason for the significant is that the difference between R<sup>2</sup> and adjusted R<sup>2</sup> are less than 5% indicating zero sample error (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Therefore, the study upholds the alternate hypotheses which stipulated that organisational justice has significant positive effect on retention of administrative employees in less developed economy (106.319; 146.980; 166.610>3.91). This implies that an increase in distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice would have a significant positive increase in reward, pay and work environment that prevents administrative employees from leaving their enterprise.

## DISCUSSION

The overall results of this study revealed that organisational justice has significant positive effect on retention of administrative employees in less developed economy. It was specifically discovered that distributive justice has significant positive effect on reward. This is in line with Zhuo et al. (2022) and Edeh and Ugwu (2017) result which indicated that distributive justice has significant effect on turnover intention and human resource retention. Secondly, procedural justice has significant positive effect on pay. This corresponds with Dike et al. (2021) and Shuaibu et al. (2021) finding which shows that procedural justice has positive significant effect on compensation and employee performance. Lastly, interactional justice has significant positive effect on work environment. The finding is in line with Mengstie (2020), and Taofiq (2020) which revealed that interactional justice has significant effect on work environment and employee engagement. However, given the circumstances of this investigation, the study suffers some setbacks which include among others its methodology in terms of research design and the analytical tool used to perform the analysis and the scope adopted. This therefore implies that the study generality to the entire less developed economies seems unhealthy, owing to the fact that only a segment of SMEs in Bayelsa State, Nigeria was used for the investigation. Thus, the study advocated for larger investigations covering other climes within less developed economies other than the ones used in this study because the

outcome could only be applicable to SMEs in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Furthermore, it would be of utmost interest for future researchers to adopt other methodological strand and analytical tool like structural equation modelling to cross validate the claims recorded in this investigation. Finally, future research direction should examine organisational justice and intention to quit of administrative employees with a mediating influence of leadership consideration in other climes within less developed economies.

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The major objective of this investigation was to examine the effect of organisational justice on the retention of administrative employees in Bayelsa State. After analysis of the collected data, it was found that organisational justice predicted the retention of administrative employees. Secondly, the results of the specific objectives revealed that distributive justice, interactional justice and procedural justice predicted retention of administrative employees that is measures with pay, reward and work environment. This study concludes that organisational justice enhances retention of administrative employees. Some of the implications of the study are that organisational leaders should ensure that resources are evenly distributed within the workplace. Thirdly, managers of SME's should endeavour to provide equitable information to every member of the organisation. Lastly, managers, directors or supervisors of SME's should adhere to fair procedures during the allocation of resources as well as information dissemination. This act of fairness in the allocation of resources would enable administrative employees of SMEs in less developed economies to be conscious, resilient, dedicated and committed to work despite the confronting challenges bedevilling them in their organisations.

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