

Exploring the Linkage between Organisational Justice, Health and Safety, and Organisational Commitment in Indian Public Sector Banks

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of organisational justice, and health and safety on organisational commitment after mergers and acquisitions (M&As) within Indian public sector banks. Exploratory-cum-descriptive research design was used in the present study. Data were collected from 210 employees through a questionnaire designed on a five-point Likert scale. The findings revealed a significant relationship of organisational justice and health and safety with organisational commitment. Notably, the standardised coefficients indicate that organisational justice ($\beta = 0.378$) has a slightly more pronounced effect on organisational commitment than health and safety ($\beta = 0.350$). These results underscore the importance of fostering a fair organisational environment and prioritising employee health and safety benefits to enhance commitment in the context of post-merger integration. Future researchers can examine the mediating influence of employee engagement and their self-efficacy on the relationship between organisational justice and commitment, along with comparative cultural analysis. Furthermore, longitudinal and qualitative research could provide deeper insights into the enduring effects of these dynamics on organisational effectiveness and employee retention.

Keywords: mergers and acquisitions; public sector banks; organisational justice; health and safety; organisational commitment

Introduction

Human beings foster relationship not solely with one another, but also with the surrounding objects, which may consist of concrete objects, theoretical constructs, or dynamic occurrences. Such subjective associations significantly influence the choice of the individuals and their actions; therefore, comprehending the subjective conditions of human operation considered as a vital domain for investigation in the management sciences. Two essential constructs that elucidate the subjective dynamics of interpersonal relationships within the organisation are fair treatment, and health and safety benefits, which affects the organisational commitment significantly. Likewise, it is imperative to comprehend the impact of these internal subjective conditions on emotional states of employees, including job satisfaction. Perception of individuals on justice within their organisation significantly shape the attitudinal and behavioural tendencies of employees, thereby influencing the levels of commitment, engagement, and overall satisfaction (Folger & Konovsky, 1989; Kernan & Hanges, 2002; Ghosh et al., 2014). The construct of perceived justice is pivotal in ascertaining the psychological states of workers, which in turn fosters a subjective connection with their work, organisation, and overall contentment. Indeed, empirical studies substantiate the primacy of perceived organisational justice in relation to commitment, engagement, and satisfaction (Al-Shbiel et al., 2018). Likewise, health and safety measures implemented by the organisation have influence on the organisational commitment of working employees (Jung, 2021).

Employees anticipate a reciprocal return for the services they provided to the organisation, but changes within organisations are also inevitable, characterized by an augmentation of unpredictability and pace (Ulrich, 1997). Organisations encounter a multitude of financial, physical, conceptual, and emotional cost while navigating the change process. Notwithstanding

the inevitability of transformation within an organisational context, the failure rate of change initiatives is estimated to be between 60% and 70% (Ashkenas, 2014). The implementation of any change (such as mergers and acquisitions) presents considerable challenges due to various obstacles encountered at different phases.

Although mergers and acquisitions (M&A) are broadly perceived as critical strategy for the growth and development of organizations across diverse industries worldwide, academic discussions continue to exhibit considerable debate regarding the implications of M&As in relation to the benefits it provides, which is deemed the primary motivation for M&As. According to Assaf et al. (2012), factors such as technology transfers, economies of scale, and diversification may drive organisations to pursue M&As endeavours. In addition, the phenomenon of bank mergers persists as a compelling subject for scholarly inquiry due to the significant distinctions that exist between banking institutions and industrial corporations. Subsequent to the global financial crisis of 2008, a considerable number of mergers transpired within the banking sector, which may further elucidate the heightened interest of researchers in this particular topic (Cumming et al., 2023).

Mergers and Acquisitions in Indian Public Sector Banks

The banking industry occupies a distinctive position in the development of economy of the nation. Economic reforms, deregulation, and market liberalisation are among the various factors that have engendered a competitive landscape within the banking industry. Public sector banks (PSBs) in India are undergoing considerable transformations, characterised by mergers, intense competition, alterations in regulatory landscape, advancements in technology, heightened customer expectations, and evolving employee demographics. Several challenges identified by the Khandelwal Committee (2010), which conducted an examination of the issues related to human resource within these banks, encompass “building capabilities for the future, improving productivity and performance culture, building talent management practices, building succession for key leadership positions, developing ownership, accountability, professionalisation and institutional mechanism for sustained human capital management, transforming HR function from legacy driven HR to developmental HR, *etc.*” (p. 10).

The phenomenon of mergers within the banking industry is occurring in a sequential manner. In the year 2017, the initial substantial consolidation of banking institutions transpired when the State Bank of India assimilated five of its subsidiaries, referred to as Associate Banks (specifically, the State Bank of Hyderabad, State Bank of Travancore, State Bank of Mysore, State Bank of Bikaner & Jaipur, and State Bank of Patiala) alongside the Bhartiya Mahila Bank (SBI Annual Report, 2017-2018). This amalgamation became operational effective from 1 April 2017. The Union Finance Minister proclaimed the merger of ten public sector banks into four entities on 30 August 2019, thereby decreasing the total number of public sector banks from twenty-seven to twelve in 2017. Effective from April 01, 2020, this amalgamation represents the biggest consolidation initiative within the banking sector including merger of Oriental Bank of Commerce (OBC) and United Bank of India (UTI) in Punjab National Bank (PNB) since the nationalisation of fourteen banks in 1969. Present study is conducted to assess the viewpoint of employees working in SBI and PNB on organisational justice, health and safety and organisational commitment after M&As.

Theoretical Review

The foundational premise of the relationship examined herein can be traced back to two fundamental theories, namely social exchange theory and equity theory. Individuals are instructed to evaluate advantages and disadvantages in nearly all aspects of existence. This practice of assessing the extent of reciprocity serves as the primary rationale for the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, according to social exchange theory (SET). The SET was conceptualised by Blau (1964) building upon the observations of social behaviours articulated by the American sociologist George Homans. Social exchange theory represents an integration of basic assumptions derived from both behaviourism and economics. The framework posits that individuals are inclined to assess the potential gains and losses prior to partaking in any form of interaction or action. An individual initiates an interaction with the intention of achieving a benefit - the person is motivated by the statement, "what advantages do I derive from this?" Furthermore, social exchange theory holds significant relevance within organisational settings, as employment involves a reciprocal relationship. For instance, a foundational principle of social exchange posits that the provision of a benefit engenders a corresponding obligation to reciprocate; employees anticipate that they will provide a benefit in return for any received. Consequently, social exchange theory offers a comprehensive framework for elucidating exchanges, attitudes, and behaviours at the workplace (Cook & Emerson, 1987). On the other hand, equity theory emerges from a multitude of theoretical foundations, notably Homan's concept of distributive justice, yet it is predominantly associated with the work of John Stacey Adams, a prominent behavioural psychologist. This theory centres on the analysis of how perceptions of equity or inequity influence an individual's motivational states, particularly regarding their willingness to engage in organisational responsibilities. According to this theoretical framework, employees are inclined to evaluate the fairness of their work environments by cognitively compare

their contributions to the organisation against the resulting outcomes, subsequently comparing this ratio with that of their peers (Adams, 1965). Consequently, individuals engage in a systematic cost-benefit analysis. In instances of perceived equity, employees experience a sense of fair treatment, which in turn motivates them to deliver optimal performance and reciprocate towards the organisation through comprehensive contributions (Walster et al. 1978). Both theoretical perspectives underscore the calculative nature inherent in human behaviour, proposing that the relative significance of exchange fundamentally shapes the interactions, engagement, and contributions of individuals across various life domains. In alignment with these theoretical propositions, the current study also investigates the impact of perceived fairness, and health and safety on organisational commitment among employees in Indian public sector banks.

Empirical Review and Hypotheses Development

Organisational Commitment

Employee commitment is frequently regarded as a pivotal determinant of organisational productivity and competence (Meyer et al., 1993). It is predominantly described as a "psychological state that delineates the employee's connection with the organisation, and bears ramifications for the decision to either persist in or end membership in the organisation" (Meyer et al., 1993, p. 539). Organisational commitment represents as psychological connection or bond that connects the individuals to the organisation (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). The concept of organisational commitment has been correlated with numerous factors within the organisational framework, such as organisational support (Williams et al., 2002) and citizenship behavior (Ok & Vandenberghe, 2016). Elevated levels of commitment are the reasons for the employee, to stay, create connections at workplace, and assist the organisation in fulfilling its objectives (Zayas-Ortiz et al., 2015).

The perception of fair organisational procedures positively correlated with heightened affective commitment among personnel (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Moreover, one of the studies also reveal that there is a noteworthy association between law enforcement officers' perceptions of organisational justice and their commitment to the organisation (Crow et al., 2012). Likewise, both procedural and interactional forms of justice had an indirect impact on organisational commitment through distributive justice. Furthermore, Ohana & Meyer (2016) inferred from their research, which encompassed 198 employees working in non-profit organisations (specifically in health and social services) in France, that individual perceptions of distributive justice are intrinsically linked to organisational affective commitment.

Swalhi et al. (2017) investigated the correlation between organisational justice and organisational commitment (affective commitment) within employees working in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in France. The findings of this study indicated that organisational justice significantly and positively influences organisational commitment. Likewise, positive relationship among various types of organisational justice and commitment is established by numerous studies (Colquitt, 2001; Lavelle et al., 2007). Therefore, it is proposed that there is notable relationship between organisational justice and organisational commitment.

Organisational Justice

Organisational justice has been established as a consequence of extensive investigations within the realm of social psychology, which have assessed the notion of fairness perceived by individuals within an organisational context (Al-Douri, 2020; Memon et al., 2016). It pertains to the subjective evaluations regarding fairness experienced by individuals within the organisation (Greenberg, 1990). The perception of justice denotes the perceived fairness of procedures, actions, and outcome distributions within an organisation, collectively referred to as organisational justice (Al-Douri, 2020; Eryilmaza et al., 2016). According to the literature, an individual's perception for justice is crucial in increasing organisational efficacy (Bies, 1986; Bies & Shapiro, 1987). These investigations contend that individuals' perceptions of fairness serve as a catalyst for engaging in pro-social behaviours, and frequently improve performance and productivity within the organisation. Topbaş et al. (2019) explored that the construct of organisational justice has gained prominence throughout the past century, driven by an increased emphasis on fairness, human rights, and equality within workplace environments. The employees' assessment of fairness regarding outcomes may significantly shape their job-related attitude and, consequently, influence their behavioural patterns and commitment (Al-Douri, 2020). Therefore, it is proposed that organisational justice is positively linked with organisational commitment (Qureshi et al., 2017).

Health and Safety

Occupational safety and health management has increasingly attracted scholarly focus due to its critical role in fostering sustainability of the organisation (Tan et al., 2023). It has been acknowledged as a domain of considerable significance, and it has garnered heightened scrutiny at both the domestic and global scales. Within the organisational context, the imperative of occupational health and safety should not be underestimated. The involvement of the entire organisation, rather than solely the safety division, is essential in safeguarding the well-being and safety of every employee within the institution. Hayes et al. (1998) identified that workplace health and safety as critical component. Steenkamp & Van Schoor

(2002) underscore the necessity for substantial focus on OHS, particularly by senior management. Occupational health and safety policies are fundamentally significant in shaping employees' intentions to leave their positions. Well-implemented policies have the potential to mitigate job dissatisfaction and elevate overall well-being, subsequently decreasing the probability of employee turnover. When individuals perceive a sense of safety and appreciation, their allegiance to the organisation is fortified. Therefore, safety protocols are instrumental in enhancing employee retention rates (Suárez-Albanchez et al., 2021).

There exists a significant correlation between the health and safety protocols instituted by the organisation and the degree of organisational commitment exhibited by employees towards the company (Amponsah-Tawiah et al., 2016; Jung, 2021). Employee health and safety management have positive impact on employee affective commitment, as evidenced by the findings of the study. The investigation illustrates that occupational safety and health practices are intrinsically linked to the employees' affective commitment. Consequently, an emphatic emphasis on employee health and safety not only elevates commitment levels, but also augments the overall sustainability of the organisation, encompassing economic, social, and environmental dimensions (Tan et al., 2023).

Therefore, we propose that:

H₁: Organisational justice is significantly correlated with organisational commitment.

H₂: There is significant influence of organisational justice on organisational commitment.

H₃: Health and safety are significantly correlated with organisational commitment.

H₄: There is significant influence of health and safety on organisational commitment.

Research Methods

Participants

This investigation examined the impact of organisational justice, and health and safety on the organisational commitment of employees within selected public sector banks. Exploratory-cum-descriptive research design was used to conduct the present study. A total of 300 questionnaires were disseminated in the timeframe of two months in 2023. The response rate achieved was 70%, as 210 filled copies of the questionnaire were returned. The final cohort of participants comprised 210 employees occupying various positions within SBI and PNB in northern area of India. The study sample included 60 female and 150 male participants. Most of the employees (122) are graduates and their income fall in the category Rs.50,000-1,00,000. The respondents aged 25 and above had the highest percentage. Majority of them belong to urban area (138). Table-1 depicts the demographic profile of the respondents. The investigator employed purposive sampling, and participants were chosen based on their availability and informed consent. The responses have been selected from head offices and branch offices of the selected banks.

Table-1: Demographic Profile

Demographics		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	150	71.40
	Female	60	28.60
Age (Years)	Below 25	55	26.20
	25 and above	155	73.80
Monthly Income (₹)	Up to 50000	33	15.70
	50000-100000	119	56.70
	Above 100000	58	27.60
Residential Status	Urban	138	65.70
	Semi-Urban	43	20.50
	Rural	29	13.80
Education	Graduation	122	58.10
	Post-Graduation	83	39.50
	Any other	5	2.4
Work Experience	0-10 years	105	50.00
	10 years and above	105	50.00
Designation	Clerk	54	25.70
	Manager	63	30.00

	Deputy Manager	37	17.60
	Specialist Officer	17	8.10
	Probationary Officer	15	7.10
	Any other	24	11.40
Name of the Bank	State Bank of India	106	50.50
	Punjab National Bank	104	49.50

Source: Author's own (N=210)

Measurements

Perception for organisational justice was evaluated through the measurement scale formulated by Niehoff & Moorman (1993). This instrument comprised seven items measured on a five-point Likert scale. The reliability coefficient for the scale was determined to be 0.873., which exceeds the threshold of 0.70. The assessment of health and safety was derived from a scale established by Macdonald & Macintyre (1997). This scale comprises six items. The reliability coefficient for this instrument is 0.883. The organisational commitment scale was developed by Allen & Meyer (1990), incorporating six items pertinent to organisational commitment to gauge perspective of the employees. The reliability coefficient for this scale is 0.870. The reliability analysis with the present data revealed reliable internal consistency (Table 2).

Table-2: Reliability Analysis

Variable	Items	Cronbach' alpha
Organisational justice	7	0.873
Health and safety	6	0.883
Organisational commitment	6	0.870

Source: Author's own

Estimation techniques

The initial data analysis employed descriptive statistics. The Pearson coefficient of correlation was used to evaluate the hypotheses concerning the correlation among the factors being examined. Multiple regression analysis was employed to investigate the impact of the two independent variables; organisational justice and health and safety on the dependent variable; organisational commitment. The outcomes of the correlation analysis are reported in Table 3.

Findings and Results

This finding elucidates a moderate positive correlation between the constructs of organisational justice and health and safety ($r = 0.530$). As employees experience elevated levels of organisational justice, their perceptions regarding health and safety concurrently improve. Furthermore, there is a strong positive correlation exists between organisational justice and organisational commitment ($r = 0.564$). This relationship suggests that employees, who perceive equitable treatment (high organisational justice), are inclined to exhibit greater commitment to the organisation. Moreover, this correlation is statistically significant. Similarly, strong positive correlation is observed, indicating that employees who perceive superior health and safety measures are predisposed to demonstrate heightened levels of organisational commitment ($r = 0.551$). The dependent variable has a positive correlation with both the independent variables. At a 95% confidence level, the relationship has been elucidated. At the 0.01 level of significance, there exists a substantial correlation between the variables. Hence, hypothesis H_1 , H_3 are accepted. Descriptive statistics and correlation of the study variables is depicted in Table 3.

Table-3: Descriptive statistics and correlation of the study variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3
Organisational justice	21.47	3.27	1		
Health and safety	20.59	4.19	0.530**	1	
Organisational commitment	22.78	2.70	0.564**	0.551**	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4: Coefficient

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	11.436	0.991		11.544	0.000
OJ	0.312	0.052	0.378	5.991	0.000

HS	0.226	0.041	0.350	5.550	0.000
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Dependent variable: OC: Organisational commitment, independent variables: OJ: Organisational justice, HS: Health and safety

Regression analysis is used to elucidate the variance and causal relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Table 4 presents the regression coefficients for the independent variables. The regression study indicate that organisational justice, and health and safety influence the employee organisational commitment positively. Table 4 depicts organisational commitment as the dependent variable in the context of the model's regression analysis. The R-squared (R^2) statistic is 40.6%, while the adjusted R^2 is 40.6% presented in the Table 5. Higher R values indicate a stronger correlation. The total model's statistical significance is evidenced by its value, which signifies that the independent variables predict changes in the dependent variable.

Table 4 contains one constant, which is 11.436, as well as the regression coefficients for the slope and Y-intercept, 0.312, and 0.226, respectively. The outcomes of the regression analysis indicate that organisational justice and health and safety exert a significant and positive influence on organisational commitment.

The regression analysis examined the influence of organisational justice and health and safety on organisational commitment. The findings revealed that the constant term was 11.436, signifying the foundational level of commitment when both organisational justice, and health and safety are at zero. More specifically, an increase of one unit in organisational justice was linked to increase of 0.312 units, whereas a one-unit rise in health and safety was associated with increase of 0.226 units in organisational commitment. The standardised coefficients indicates that organisational justice ($\beta = 0.378$) exerted a marginally more pronounced effect on commitment as compared to health and safety ($\beta = 0.350$). Both predictors exhibited significant correlations and influence on organisational commitment, as evidenced by elevated t-values 5.991 and 5.550 ($p < 0.001$) for organisational justice, and health and safety. These findings emphasise the importance of fostering a fair and safe work environment to enhance employee commitment, with organisational justice being particularly more impactful. Table 5 delineates the outcomes of a variance analysis. The statistical significance of the overall model is represented by its F-value, and the independent variables are shown possessing the capacity to forecast variations in the dependent variable. Hence, hypothesis H_2 and H_4 are accepted.

Table 5: Model

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.637	0.406	0.400	2.09167

a. Predictors: (Constant), Organisational justice, Health and safety

Table 6: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	619.550	2	309.775	70.805	0.000 ^b
Residual	905.640	207	4.375		
Total	1525.190	209			

Note: a. predictors: (constant) Organisational justice, Health and safety b. Dependent variable: Organisational commitment.

Discussion

The results of this investigation emphasize the pivotal significance of both organisational justice, and health and safety in augmenting organisational commitment among the workforce. The regression analysis elucidates that, even when controlling for other variables, a fundamental level of commitment is evident, represented by the constant term. This implies that employees maintain a baseline level of commitment that can be modulated by external influences. The coefficient for organisational justice ($\beta = 0.378$) in comparison to health and safety ($\beta = 0.350$) intimates that perceptions of fairness may possess a marginally greater capacity to foster commitment than perceptions for health and safety benefits. This observation is consistent with the result, which asserts that a fair treatment process cultivates trust and loyalty among employees, thereby reinforcing their commitment to the organisation (Al-Douri, 2020).

Conversely, health and safety also constitute a crucial component, facilitating a 0.226 unit increase in organisational commitment for each unit increment in health and safety. The notable t-value (5.550) showed that health and safety have its significant influence on organisational commitment of the employees. Results are aligned with the study (Tan et al., 2023), which reveal that the prioritisation of health and safety within the workplace not only shields employees from

potential harm, but also engenders a sense of security that can amplify their engagement and loyalty to the organisation. The implications of these findings are manifold. Firstly, organisations should prioritise the development of equitable policies and practices to enhance perceptions of organisational justice. This may entail transparent decision-making frameworks, fair treatment among the employees, and systems for addressing grievances. Such practices can nurture organisational culture that promotes commitment. Secondly, the ensuring health and safety benefits is equally essential. Employees who perceive their work environment as safe and job is giving health and safety benefits are more inclined to exhibit elevated levels of commitment. Moreover, organisations should promote a culture that prioritises employee wellbeing. In conclusion, the interaction between organisational justice and health and safety is paramount for the enhancement of organisational commitment. This study not only advances the theoretical comprehension of these constructs, but also provides pragmatic insights for organisational leaders aspiring to bolster employee engagement and loyalty.

Directions for future research

Future research can delve into several key directions to expand upon the results of this investigation after M&As. Initially, an exploration of the mediating and moderating influences of constructs such as employee engagement, readiness to change, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and demographic variables may enhance comprehension of the ways in which organisational justice and health and safety impact organisational commitment. Furthermore, comparative analysis considering cultural context are crucial for evaluating the applicability of these findings, as varying practices and perceptions may significantly affect the outcomes. Longitudinal studies would also prove advantageous, as it would enable scholars to monitor changes over time and ascertain whether promoting organisational justice and health and safety result in enduring increases in commitment in different service sectors. Incorporating qualitative approaches such as interviews or focus groups, could provide more profound insights into employees' perceptions and experiences, thereby illuminating the underlying mechanisms that drive organisational commitment. Lastly, investigating the downstream repercussions of organisational commitment on organisational efficacy and employee retention would yield significant insights for leaders aiming to bolster workplace engagement and allegiance. Collectively, these directions hold the potential to explore the interrelationship between organisational justice, health and safety, and commitment in diverse settings.

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