

# The Relationship between Perceived Organizational Justice with the Meaning at Work and Feeling of Energy at Workplace: A Structural Equation Modeling Approach

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## ABSTRACT

Perceived organizational justice in the workplaces can have different roles for staff. One of its roles is reinforcing the search for meaning and a feeling of vitality and energy. So, based on this, the role of perceived organizational justice dimensions for the meaning at work and a feeling of energy in the workplaces have been examined in this study. For this purpose, through a correlation study, by choosing 296 staff of art and cultural organization of Isfahan municipality who answered the questionnaires of perceived organizational justice, a feeling of energy at work, and the meaning at work, the research hypotheses were examined through Pearson correlation coefficient and structural equation modeling (SEM). The results showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between four dimensions of organizational justice included distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice, and a feeling of energy and the meaning at work. The results of structural equation modeling also showed that firstly, among four dimensions of perceived organizational justice, just an interpersonal justice can predict the meaning at work and a feeling of energy in the workplaces. Also, the results of mediation analysis showed that the meaning at work is a partial mediator variable in the relationship between interpersonal justice and a feeling of energy.

**KEY WORDS:** organizational justice, the meaning at work, a feeling of energy at work

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the years, scholars in behavioral science and management in the workplace have been seeking for variables through which they can conduct staff in the way of promoting performance and effectiveness in any better way. The results of these efforts were valuable classifications of variables which can conduct individuals toward a better feeling and performance in the workplaces (Patterson, Warr & West, 2004; Latham & Pinder, 2005). The current classifications about efficient factors on individuals' cognitive and affective states in the workplaces are often in agreement with individual micro and macro factors (positive and negative behaviors, perceptions, cognitions, attitudes, emotions, excitements, and personality factors) and situational factors (job and organizational factors) which each in its part establishes a decisive condition for individuals (Holloway, 2012; Kanten & Erülker, 2013; Priesemuth, Arnaud & Schminke, 2013). Among these factors, perceived organizational justice has a specific position in individual and situational level.

## 2. LITURATURE REVIEW

### a. Perceived Organizational Justice (POJ)

From when organizational justice has been considered as an individual (of a perceptual dimension) and situational phenomenon (of its effectiveness of systems and job and organizational processes) in scientific and research texts (McCain, Tsai & Bellino, 2010), it has already been determined that the study of this phenomenon is important for several major reasons. The first reason is that justice is a social phenomenon and affects important aspects of human life such as social and organizational life (Frazier, Johnson, Garn, Cooty & Snauss, 2010; Golparvar, 2012; Akanbi & Ofoegbu, 2013). The second reason is that compliance or noncompliance of organizational justice and its dimensions has a significant relationship with variables such as commitment, trust, performance, search for job alternative, and aggression (Elamin & Alomain, 2011; Chan & Jespen, 2011; Golparvar & Javadian, 2012; Lee, Murrman, Murrman & Kim, 2012). Regarding the available researches, organizational justice covers three areas, including perceived distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (Choi, 2011; Golparvar, Kamkar & Javadian,

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2012). In recent years, perceived interactional justice has been divided in two areas of interpersonal and informational justice (Karimaei & Seyed Amiri, 2013). The emphasis on the word perceived in organizational justice refers to the fact that presence or absence of justice in individuals' mental phenomenological space is considerable (Najafi, Noruzy, Azar, Nazari-Shirkouhi & Dalvand, 2011; Muzumdar, 2012; Miller, Konopaske & Byrne, 2012). Distributive justice is related to the observance of justice and equity in distributing outcomes, achievements, and rewards; procedural justice is related to decision-making procedures, performance, and imparting decision; and interpersonal and informational justice is also related to the observance of justice in interaction and exchange of information and the relationship between official authorities of organization and staff (Dayan & Benedetto, 2008; Szilas, 2011). Up until now, a numerous range of studies have been examined with perceived organizational justice (Tallman, Phipps & Matheson, 2009; Ponnu & Chuah, 2010; Promket, Thanyaphirak & Promket, 2012; Rai, 2013; Oren, Tziner, Nahshon & Sharoni, 2013). Among them, two meta-analyses of Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001) and Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, and Ng (2001) indicate that organizational justice has a relationship with different dimensions of positive and negative behaviors, and experiencing positive and negative emotions and effectiveness. Among a numerous range of variables which can potentially be associated with perceived organizational justice, in this study it is focused more on the meaning at work and a feeling of energy in the workplace.

#### **b. Meaning at Work (MAW) and Organizational Justice (OJ)**

The search for meaning at work and life is among topics was long regarded in the field of psychology. For example, Maslow (1971) believed that when individuals cannot experience the meaning in their work environment, they won't be able to develop their human and professional capacities. Looking at the theories in the field of the meaning at work shows that there is no consensus about the areas and dimensions of this variable (Weick, 1998; Harpaz & Fu, 2002; Wrzesniewski, 2003; Rosso, Dekas & Wrzesniewski, 2010; Akın, Hamedoğlu, Kaya & Sarıçam, 2013). However, in a theoretical and operational formulation, Steger, Dik and Duffy (2012) believe that the meaning at work includes individuals' mental and psychological efforts for experiencing the meaning at work and work experiences. In Steger et al.'s (2012) approach, this phenomenon consists of three areas of experiencing positive meaning at work, a feeling of being meaningful in the work path, and finally this perception that the human job is at the service of great and favorable goals. Such experiences due to their mental and psychological nature are associated with numerous variables such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and values such as individual talents development (Rosso et al, 2010; Dik & Duffy, 2012; Akın et al, 2013). More beyond that, the meaning at work is a factor for individuals to gain more life satisfaction (Steger and Dik, 2009; Steger et al., 2012). Evaluations of the results in existing databases showed that the role of perceived organizational justice for the meaning at work has been examined in fewer studies. However, according to what mentioned about the meaning at work, we can say that organizational justice components has the ability to cause individuals gain more meaning at work by achieving positive experiences in their own workplace (Najafi et al, 2011; Muzumdar, 2012; Miller et al, 2012; Promket et al, 2012; Rai, 2013; Oren et al, 2013). Also, available evidences show that the meaning at work is a factor for reinforcing intrinsic motivation and life satisfaction (Steger, Pickering, Adams, Burnett, Shin et al, 2010; Steger & Dik, 2010; Hicks & Routledge, 2013; Dik, Byrne & Steger, 2013; Dik, Byrne & Steger, 2013). The researchers' belief of this study is that the meaning at work with its role in different job and life satisfaction can itself reinforce a feeling of energy at work.

#### **c. Energy at Work (EAW), MAW and OJ**

Energy is a phenomenon which allows human to perform his different physical, mental or affective duties by spending some of his power in different living environments (Baker, Cross & Wooten, 2003; Cross, Baker & Parker, 2003). Having a feeling of energy as an important and vital factor for performing can be introduced in individual and organizational level (Dutton, 2003; Quinn, 2007). Research evidences show that individuals who feel more energy in their living and working environment attempt more in performing their duties and business affairs and also gain more success (Heaphy & Dutton, 2008). Moreover, in most cases, energy leads to individual and team performance, creativity and job satisfaction in the workplace (Shraga & Shirom, 2009; Golparvar, Padash & Atashpoor, 2010). Up until now, in some theorizing, an energy level is classified in three types of individual, team, and organizational energy (Baker et al, 2003). Among these three types of energy, many researchers yet focused on individual energy and have provided significant findings about it to the global scientific community (Heaphy & Dutton, 2008; Atwater & Carmeli, 2009; Golparvar et al, 2010). The most important provided research findings imply that a feeling of energy in individuals contains three physical, cognitive, and affective components. It means that when individuals want to evaluate the level of their energy, they simultaneously refer to their physical,

cognitive, and affective indicators. Therefore, each factor which can physically, cognitively, and affectively put individuals in the situation of happiness and preparation can also increase the level of individual’s feeling of energy fundamentally. Significant research evidences showed that both perceived organizational justice (Tallman et al, 2009; McCain et al, 2010; Frazir et al, 2010; Ponnu&Chuah, 2010; Elamin& Alomain, 2011; Chan &Jespen, 2011; Promket et al, 2012; Golparvar, 2012; Lee et al, 2012; Akanbi& Ofoegbu, 2013) and the meaning at work (Cohen-Meitar, Carmeli& Waldman, 2009; Steger &Dik, 2009; Steger et al, 2010; Steger &Dik, 2010; Rosso et al, 2010; Dik& Duffy, 2012; Steger et al., 2012; Akin et al, 2013; Hicks & Routledge, 2013; Dik et al, 2013) have a positive relationship with experiencing positive cognitive and affective and even physical and behavioral states. Accordingly, it can be said that a feeling of energy at work can has a positive relationship with both organizational justice and the meaning at work.

**d. Conceptual Model of Research**

Based on what was mentioned above, in this study, a three-level model based on the relationship between perceived organizational justice components and the meaning at work and then the relationship between the meaning at work and a feeling of energy in the workplace have been introduced and examined. This conceptual model is presented in Figure 1. A theoretical basis of this model is that justice due to its perceptual and situational nature which has also an ethics and value load of that is an important underlying factor for reinforcing the meaning at work. Meanwhile, the meaning at work has the ability to spillover its positive affective states to a feeling of energy at work.

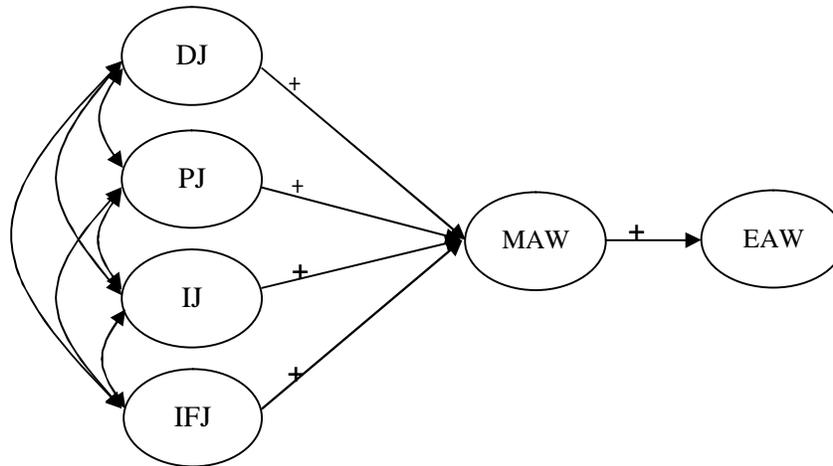


Figure 1. Research Conceptual Model

**1.5. Research Hypotheses**

Hypotheses which are based on conceptual model of this study are as follows:

**H1:** There is a positive relationship between perceived organizational justice components (distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational) and the meaning at work.

**H2:** There is a positive relationship between the meaning at work and a feeling of energy at workplace.

**H3:**The meaning at work is a mediator variable in the relationship between perceived organizational justice components (distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational) and a feeling of energy at workplace.

**3. METHODOLOGY**

**a. Research Method and Participants**

Research method of current research was correlation, and the sample used consisted of full time employees, from an art and cultural organization of Isfahan municipality, in Iran. The three hundred questionnaires (containing measures of perceived organizational justice, feeling of energy, and meaning at work) were distributed among employees and asking for their assistance in completing the questionnaires. Two hundred ninety six of the employees completed the questionnaire for a response rate of 98.7%. The average age of the respondents was 36.17 years (SD=7.01) and the average organizational tenure of the respondents were 11.08 years (SD=5.08).

## 2.2. Instruments

**2.2.1. Perceived organizational justice:** Justice was measured with the twenty item scale developed by Shibaoka et al (2010). This scale measures four justice dimensions; distributive justice (four items, An example item is: Does your outcome reflect the effort you have put into your work?), procedural justice (seven items, An example item is: Have procedures in your organization upheld ethical and moral standards?), interpersonal justice (four items, An example item is: Has your supervisor treated you in a polite manner), and informational justice (five items, An example item is: Has your supervisor explained the procedures thoroughly). This scale has been translated and validated at Iranian work settings in previous research (Golparvar&Javadian, 2012). In four subscales, responses are given along a 5-point scale from 1=small extent to 5=very much. Cronbach's alpha for the four dimensions of perceived organizational justice (procedural justice, distributive justice, interpersonal justice, and informational justice) in previous research were 0.79, 0.72, 0.76, and 0.71 respectively(Golparvar &Javadian, 2012), and in current research for the four dimensions of perceived organizational justice (procedural, distributive, interpersonal, and informational)were 0.82, 0.75, 0.78, and 0.79 respectively.

**2.2.2. Meaning at Work:** Meaning at work was measured using ten items adapted from Steger et al (2012). Golparvar (2013) translated and validated this scale at Iranian work context. Total score on this scale is considered for the assessment of meaning at work and more the score indicates more meaning at work. A sample item of this scale is:I view my work as contributing to my personal growth. In this scale, responses are given along a 5-point scale from 1= absolutely untrue to5= absolutely true. The reliability and validity of the scale have been demonstrated in Iran society (Golparvar, 2013). Reliability of questionnaires through Cronbach's Alpha in current research was .94.

**2.2.3. Feeling of energy at work:** Feeling of energy at work was measured using eight items adapted from Atwater and Carmeli (2009). Golparvar et al (2010) translated and validated this scale at Iranian work context. Total score on this scale is considered for the assessment of feeling of energy and more the score indicates more feeling of energy. A sample item of this scale is: I am energetic when perform my work task. In this scale, responses are given along a 7-point scale from 1= never to 7= always. The reliability and validity of the scale have been demonstrated in Iran society. For instance, reliability of this scale in previous investigation was .88 (Golparvar et al, 2010). Cronbach's Alpha of this scale in current research was .91.

## 3.RESULTS

Data were analyzed using SPSS-18 software, to compute descriptive statistics, correlations, and using AMOS-16 to performing structural equation modeling (SEM).Table (1) presents some of the demographic variables of the current research participants.

Table 1. Demographic variables of the participants in current research

Row	Demographic variables	Levels	Percent
1	Education	Secondary studies or Diploma	30.5
		University studies	69.5
2	Gender	Male	54.7
		Female	45.3
3	Marital Status	Single	21
		Married	79
4	Age	Up to 35 years	52.7
		36 years and above	47.3
5	Tenure	Up to 10 years	52
		11 years and above	48

As it can be seen in table 1, Fifty-four and seven percent (54.7%) of the sample were males and forty- five and three percent (45.3%) were females. twenty-one percent (21%) of the sample were single and seventy nine percent (79%) were married. Majority of the sample had university studies (69.5%). Fifty-two and seven percent (52.7%) of the sample had up to 35 years old and forty- seven and three percent (47.3%) of them had 36 years old and above. Finally, Fifty-two percent (52%) of the sample had up to 10 years organizational tenure and forty- eight percent (48%) of them had 11 years organizational tenure and above. Mean, standard deviation and correlation matrix of the research variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix of research variables

Row	Research variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1	Procedural justice	2.63	.75	-				
2	Distributive justice	2.68	.75	.78**	-			
3	Interpersonal justice	3.64	.69	.35**	.3**	-		
4	Informational justice	3.13	.76	.68**	.58**	.68**	-	
5	Meaning at work	3.62	.86	.21**	.22**	.25**	.2**	-
6	Feeling of Energy at work	3.88	.85	.27**	.27**	.28**	.27**	.45**

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

As the results of table 2 revealed, all of the components of the perceived organizational justice are positively and significantly correlated with the meaning at work and feeling of energy at work ( $p < .01$ ). Also as it can be seen in table 2, there is positive and significant relationship between meaning at work and feeling of energy at work ( $p < .01$ ). Thus, it is concluded that the first hypothesis (H1, there is a positive relationship between perceived organizational justice components (distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational) and the meaning at work) is supported completely, and also second hypothesis (H2, there is a positive relationship between the meaning at work and a feeling of energy at workplace) is supported completely. After estimation of the hypothesized model (Figure 1) through structural equation modeling, the model was modified to improve model fit. Model modifications are often needed in structural equation modeling in order to increase the fit of the model to the data (Meyers, Gamst & Guarino, 2006). The results of structural equation modeling for final and revised model presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The results of structural equation modeling for final and revised model

		b	SE	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>
1	Interpersonal Justice (IJ) → Meaning at Work (MAW)	.32**	.07	.25**	.065
2	Meaning at Work (MAW) → Energy at Work (EAW)	.4**	.05	.4**	.0231
3	Interpersonal Justice (IJ) → Energy at Work (EAW)	.22**	.06	.18**	

\*\*  $p < .01$

As it can be seen in table 3, in final and revised model a three path deleted from procedural justice, distributive justice and informational justice to meaning at work (there were not significant) and a path add from interpersonal justice (IJ) to energy at work (EAW). Therefore, interpersonal justice (IJ) was found to be the most important predictor of meaning at work (MAW), and then interpersonal justice (IJ) and meaning at work (MAW) is found to affect the energy at work (EAW) both directly and, indirectly, from interpersonal justice (IJ) to energy at work (EAW) through the meaning at work (MAW) (Table 2 and Figure 2). The final model provided a good fit to the data according to the number of indicators (Meyers et al, 2006): chi square ( $\chi^2$ ) = 0, ( $p > .01$ , not significant), average standardized residual = 0, comparative fit index (CFI) = 1, normative fit index (NFI) = 1, goodness of fit index (GFI) = 1, incremental fit index (IFI) = 1, root mean square residual (RMSR) = 0 and root mean square error approximation (RMSEA) = 0. Another indicator of the model's acceptable fit is the chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio. A model is considered acceptable if this ratio is less than 2 (Meyers et al, 2006). In our model, the chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio is 0. The final and revised model presented in figure 2. Also there is essential to consider that the indirect effect of interpersonal justice on feeling of energy at work through meaning at work is .125 ( $p < .01$ ). Finally, on the basis of results presented in table 3, only the interpersonal justice (IJ) is found to affect the meaning at work (MAW), as predicted partially in our first hypothesis. Also meaning at work (MAW) is found to affect the energy at work (EAW) directly, as predicted in our second hypothesis. The effect of interpersonal justice (IJ) on energy at work (EAW) was hypothesized to be mediated by meaning at work (MAW) (third hypothesis or H3). On the basis of presented results in table 3, the third hypothesis (H3) supported partially (that is, only for interpersonal justice).

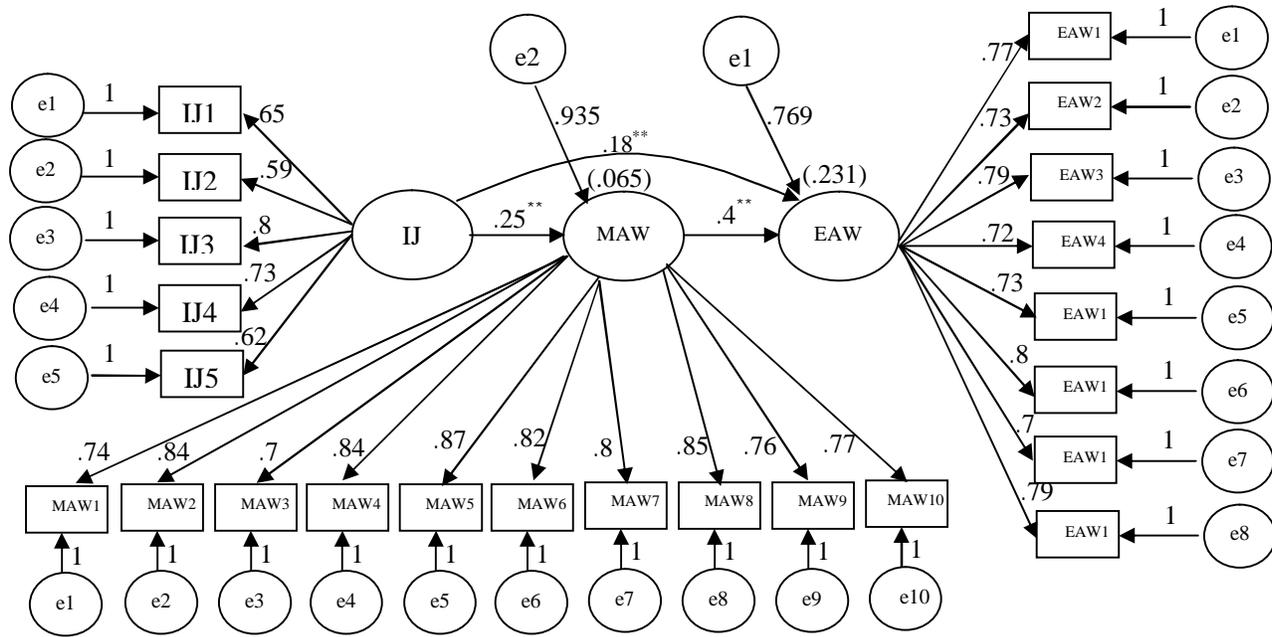


Figure2. Final and revised model of current research

#### 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study and in a simple correlation levels, there is a positive relationship between distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice and a feeling of energy and the meaning at work. These results implicitly and not completely align with what has been mentioned about the relationship between perceived organizational justice and cognitive and positive affects (Muzumdar, 2012; Miller et al, 2012; Promket et al, 2012; Rai, 2013) and cognitions (Golparvar, 2012; Golparvar et al, 2012) in previous researches and meta-analyses such as Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001) and Colquitt et al. (2001). This part of findings of this study also shows that one of the most important justice functions which is reinforcing the meaning at work and a feeling of energy which have been paid attention in fewer studies of previous researchers.

Since, in available researches the direct role of justice for the meaning at work and a feeling of energy in the workplace has not been mentioned. Theoretically, the relationship between perceived organizational justice and the meaning at work can be seen in the fact that the existence of justice in distribution of outcomes, interpersonal relationship, and exchanging information to individuals will give them the cognitive opportunity to be able to follow deeper and more lasting goals in performing their duties and business affairs with more relief (Tallman et al, 2009; Ponnu&Chuah, 2010; Promket et al, 2012; Rai, 2013; Oren et al, 2013). On the other hand, the observance of justice in each of mentioned areas will promote individual and group worthiness for this variable (Cohen-Meitar et al, 2009; Steger &Dik, 2009; Steger et al, 2010; Steger &Dik, 2010; Rosso et al, 2010).

This promotion of being valuable is itself a motivating factor for more being meaningful and search for meaning at work (Dik& Duffy, 2012; Steger et al., 2012; Akın et al, 2013; Hicks & Routledge, 2013; Dik et al, 2013). The relationship between perceived organizational justice and a feeling of energy at work is also explainable theoretically by experiencing positive cognitions and emotions. Previous researches showed that organizational justice has a relationship with positive affects, commitment, and satisfaction which each of them has a positive affective dimension (Frazier et al, 2010; Elamin&Alomain, 2011; Chan &Jespen, 2011; Golparvar&Javadian, 2012; Lee et al, 2012; Akanbi&Ofoegbu, 2013). Nevertheless, the difference between a feeling of energy and variables such as positive affects, commitment, and satisfaction is that it is a variable with a positive cognitive and affective load which has a more general aspect in relation to other mentioned variables (Dutton, 2003; Quinn, 2007; Heaphy& Dutton, 2008). In a simple meaning, a feeling of energy doesn't have a determined goal like an organization or occupation. Totally, it seems that organizational justice after effecting on positive cognitive and affective states such as positive affect, commitment, and satisfaction provides a background to increase individuals' energy level in the workplace.

Beyond simple relationships between components of organizational justice with the meaning at work and a feeling of energy, three-level model of this study with this change that interpersonal justice in a series of chain relationship reinforces the level of the meaning at work, and then the meaning at work which has a significant positive cognitive and affective load and has a positive relationship with job and life satisfaction (Steger & Dik, 2010; Rosso et al, 2010; Dik & Duffy, 2012; Steger et al., 2012; Akin et al, 2013; Hicks & Routledge, 2013; Dik et al, 2013), will overflow the level of its own reinforced positive cognitive and affective load to a feeling of energy at work. A model or research which previously had been examined these chain relationships was not available in order to talk about it in the field of alignment and non-alignment of the findings of this study. Theoretically, the final confirmed model in this study indicates that there is a kind of overflowing of positive cognitive and affective states from micro-level experiences (job and business) to cognitive and affective states of macro-level (individual or general feeling of energy).

In a more clear definition, findings of this study show that when interpersonal justice cause experiencing a positive meaning at work, a feeling of the work path being meaningful, and realizing a work as a service in the direction of great and favorable goals, this feeling leads to a general and individual feeling of energy at work. So, based on this, it seems that a feeling of energy is a public resource full of cognitive and affective vitality which one of its inputs is the meaning at work. Meanwhile, this fact that there was no relationship between other dimensions of perceived organizational justice in the final model of this research and the meaning at work, it has more likely been influenced by the fact that dimensions of considered justice for the members of the current sample group were not too much serious and important issue. Some research evidences showed that, at different times, certain dimensions of justice are affected by economical, organizational, and social conditions (Chan & Jespen, 2011; Golparvar & Javadian, 2012; Golparvar et al, 2012). Such influence on certain dimensions of justice causes some dimensions of justice to stay with staff's cognitive, behaviors, and emotions in a communication circuit and other dimensions to leave the circuit (Golparvar, 2012). Therefore, we can more likely say that according to the current organization and staff conditions of this study interpersonal justice is more important than other dimensions of justice.

## **5. SUGGESTIONS AND LIMITATIONS**

The results of this study discussed significant theoretical and practical implications for the role of perceived organizational justice in the workplaces. The first theoretical point is that the findings of this study show that one of potential functions of experiencing justice at work, especially experiencing the interpersonal justice, is the increased feeling of the work path being meaningful and then a feeling of energy and vitality in the workplace. Due to the fact that the meaning at work and a feeling of energy in the workplace have high power to reinforce individual and organizational performance and effectiveness in a better way, this issue will be increasingly important. Therefore, an important theoretical implication for this study is expanding the body of human knowledge about the roles and functions of perceived organizational justice. The next point in an application level is that one of the operational ways to increase the meaning at work and a feeling of energy in staff is providing experiencing justice especially experiencing an interpersonal justice.

According to this fact that experiencing interpersonal justice depends on supervisors and managers behavior and decision making in organizations, training supervisors and managers in this dimension or dimensions of justice can have a decisive role for the meaning at work and a feeling of energy of staff. From the research point of view, we can also recommend researchers to examine the role of organizational justice and the meaning at work with a feeling of energy at work for individual and organizational performance and effectiveness in multilevel models through which chain functions of perceived organizational justice for organizational effectiveness become more determined. In this study, like other studies, there were also some limitations which should be paid more attention to. The first limitation is that the sample group of this study was staff of a service organization. It is likely that the condition of provided model in this study would be different in industrial and commercial organizations. Therefore, caution is required in generalizing our results to these organizations. The second limitation is that the results of this study were based on a correlation method. So, the cause and effect interpretation of these results isn't logical.

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