



Research Article

DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG TEACHERS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BAMENDA, NORTH WEST REGION OF CAMEROON

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between distributive justice and the psychological well-being of teachers in the Archdiocese of Bamenda North West Region of Cameroon. The main research question for the study was to find out the effect of distributive justice on the psychological well-being of teachers in the Archdiocese of Bamenda, North West Region of Cameroon. The study employed a cross sectional survey research design. The sample for the study comprised of 270 male and female teachers working in Catholic nursery, primary and secondary schools within the Mankon and Bambui Deaneries of the Archdiocese of Bamenda. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Quantitative data were analyzed using the linear regression technique. Findings revealed that 65% of teachers' responses indicated dissatisfaction with distributive justice in the Catholic Education Agency of the Archdiocese of Bamenda and also that there was no relationship between distributive justice and the psychological well-being of teachers and thus no significant effect of distributive justice on the psychological well-being of teachers of the Archdiocese of Bamenda. Based on the findings, the study recommended that the government should effectively follow-up, monitor and audit the channels of paying subvention funds to beneficiary private sector teachers to ensure that the money reaches the intended beneficiaries uncompromised. The study further recommended that private sector education employers should uphold honesty, accountability and transparency in the management of subventions and payment of salaries to teachers and that they allow private sector education teachers to exercise their right to form trade union to defend their labour interests.

KEYWORDS

Distributive Justice, Teachers' Psychological Wellbeing.

INTRODUCTION

Justice in an organization is all about fairness and matters about workplace behaviour. It includes gender equality, access to training, fair treatment from superiors and good wages. Employees are concerned with the decisions made by their employers daily both on a large and small scale. They review these decisions in their mind as fair or unfair. These judgments can influence the behaviour of an individual and lead to workplace deviance if he or she considers it unfair. Fairness is of central interest to modern managers concerned about providing equal employment opportunities, fair labour practices and paying a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. Just as referees should ensure that all participants have a fair chance to compete, managers are responsible for the fair treatment of employees. The differing perspectives, interests and goals of managers and subordinates, however, make it difficult to determine what exactly employees regard as fair treatment.

Well-being comprises an individual's experience of their life as well as a comparison of life circumstances with social norms and values (WHO, 2012). According to WHO (2014), well-being in working life can be affected by the work environment and relationships with managers and colleagues. Well-being can be described as the state of being healthy, comfortable, or happy and being able to engage what is going on around their everyday life. Well-being in both working life and private life can also be affected by work-life balance, where a good work-life balance promotes a better sense of mental and physical well-being (WHO, 2012).

Olatunde and Odusanya (2015) opine that the challenge of psychological wellbeing among teachers in most private agencies remains a serious issue that needs urgent attention. This comes as a result of the rigorous work load, pressure, and multiple roles assigned to them in their place of work, a situation that makes them unhappy (Saidu, 2013). Any unhappy situation in the work place is always a call for any affected workers to raise their voices in the call for an equal and just treatment amongst all. Organisations thus have to pursue justice, as measured by reality as well as by perceptions.

Greenhaus & Granrose (1992) argue that wellbeing indicates satisfaction or strain in major domains of individuals lives. Employee wellbeing generally assumes that happiness equates to job satisfaction, with studies showing that positive affects indicate the absence of negative affects including the lack of emotional exhaustion and positive psychological wellbeing of employees among employees of the educational sector (Cropanzano & Wright, 2001). Therefore, to understand employee wellbeing, it is necessary to analyse a broad concept of wellbeing (van Horn, Taris, Schaufeli & Schreurs, 2004).

However, in pursuing principles of distributive justice for example, it is not possible to achieve all criteria at the same time. In fact, the principles of equality, sufficiency, liberty, utility, priority, merit, and equality of opportunity cannot be all satisfied at the same time. Therefore, our catholic educational institutions are left with a superordinate problem: how to achieve balance between the principles of distributive justice. One possibility is to determine which of the goals is most

important to a given situation. Cohen-crash and Specter (2001) believe that when a person makes the distribution of outcomes in the sense of injustice, the consequences will result to a psychological contract breach. Psychological contract is unwritten mutually understood obligations between employee and an employer. Distributive injustice can result in missed opportunities regarding education, work, housing, health care, and more. In addition, a person who experiences unequal access in just one of these levels may experience a cascade of difficulties in the other areas. As such Cohen-crash and Specter (2001) acknowledge that, employees who are faced with injustice seek revenge and retaliation. Retaliation compounds a prospect of bad interpersonal treatment, located in the theoretical umbrella of deviant behavior at the workplace. Retaliatory attitudes arise as a result of the terms of an inappropriate trade between bosses and employees or directly between employees (Goergen, Cerutti, & Perin, 2018).

In the organizational context retaliation is used as an instrumental perspective, since employees use it as a way to seek the restoration of justice through actions that compensate for the perceived damages, which are due to unfair treatment. Previous studies propose that this behavior can also occur when employees have strained relationships with their managers and perceive this relationship as unfair (Townsend, et al., 2000; Charness & Levine, 2010). Retaliatory actions can range from verbal abuse, jokes that ridicule the co-workers, dysfunctional communication (gossip), omissions and boycotts. Such behaviors are influenced by the organizational personal actors' attributes, which are issued subtly or aggressively in response to perceived injustice at work, against the organization or people who belong to it. These negative behaviors aim to harm the organization or colleagues in response to

perceived injustices. Grapanzanv and Greenberg (1997) in their study concluded that the way workers are treated without respect by supervisors engenders anger, disappointment and contempt. Because distributive justice refers to the fairness associated with specific outcomes such as remuneration, rewards and recognition, it can represent a key psychological mechanism in the relationship between leadership and work life quality. Entrepreneurial behavior concerning distributive justice has been found to be negatively related to corruption and illegal behavior.

On the other side of the coin, ethical leadership behavior engenders employees' trust in their employing organization, which in turn promotes their justice perceptions toward the organization as well as their improved understanding of the procedural and interactional justice. Nevertheless, distributive justice cannot fully explain a worker's reactions to perceived injustice because it considers solely the motivator of negative reactions factors related to the distribution and allocation of rewards. It does not consider the social factors and the conditions in which the rewards are given, being fair or not. According to Usmani and Jamal (2013), today distributive justices, consist of four allocations rules such as, equity theory, equality, need based, and seniority. Equity theory refers to employee's perception of decision outcomes such as pay, benefits, incentives, punishments, promotions and rewards. According to Adam (1965) employees compare their inputs (education, age, intelligence, experience, training, skills and efforts) with positive (rewards, advancement opportunities and fringe benefits that employees receive from a job situation) and negative outcomes (punishments, poor working conditions, uncertainty, and insult and fatigue) to that of a referent employee (Bolino & Turnley, 2008; Fischer, 2012). The comparison that outcomes are

inequitable leads employees to perceive treatment as unfair (Adam, 1965; Bolino & Turnley, 2008).

Nawakowski and Conlon (2005) indicated that the rules of equity, equality and need are applied in different context in organizations. For example, salary increase is done on the basis of past performance (equity), while medical aid payments might be distributed equally (equality), and the printing department may be allocated higher budget (business need). Likewise, Greenberg (2001) mentioned that people from different culture favor different rules for distribution of resources. He specifically mentioned that, while allocating rewards, Americans generally like equity rule, Indian favor distribution on the basis of need rule, while the Netherlands prefer equality rule for distribution. This indicates that there is no consensus, when and under which circumstances each rule should be applied. There are considerable amount of literature reflecting that all three allocation rules are useful for distribution of resources, but it is less clear when each rule will be applied and considered fair.

Adams' Equity Theory of Motivation suggests that if individuals perceive that their rewards are not fair, they will feel distressed and try to change things to create a sense of fairness. When employees perceive that their managers treat them fairly, they seem more likely to demonstrate positive work attitudes and behaviours at the workplace (Cohen-Charash, & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001). In case, employees perceive that they have not been treated fairly at workplace, such unfair conditions will negatively affect employees' well-being and generate negative feelings of stress such as anger, resentment and retaliatory behavior.

The social exchange theory of Thibaut and Kelley states that employees trust is important to improve and develop the social exchange relationships (e.g., employees and supervisor relationships where they

cooperate and exchange favors over an indefinite period of time) as it minimizes the doubt about employee's/supervisor reciprocation while creating a sense of obligation (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano, Anthony, Daniels, and Hall, 2017; Valizade et al, 2016). The norm of reciprocity in social exchange theory addresses the key principle that people should help those who help them and in turn, those whom you have helped have an obligation to help you. Hence, in employer and employees' relationship, there exist expectation of exchanges. The fairness of exchanges, an employee perception of fair treatment received from the organization, and his behavior towards such perceptions are a foundation of Organizational Justice (OJ) (Chou, Chou, Jiang and Klein, 2013; Colquitt et al., 2013).

Methods

The cross sectional survey research was used. The sample of this study was made up of 270 teachers (63% females and 33% males). Regarding marital status, most respondents were married (51%), followed by those who were single (34%), single parents (10%) and widows and widowers (05%). Looking at the level of education, 38% were holders of Grade I Certificates, 35% were holders of Bachelor's Degrees, 9% were holders of Master's Degrees, 8% were holders of Advanced Level Certificates, 7% were holders of Ordinary Level Certificates and 2% were holder of a PhD Degree.

The structured 4 point Likert scale questionnaire was used for data collection. Before the analysis was done, some assumptions were tested namely linearity, normality and homoscedasticity. Before running the linear regression, data was cleaned by crosschecking the frequencies for missing values. The number of missing values was examined not to be above 10% so as to avoid having biased results. Data was analyzed using inferential and descriptive statistics.

Findings

Distributive justice and the psychological well-being of teachers of the Archdiocese of Bamenda

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of responses on Distributive Justice

SN	Items	SA	A	D	SD	No response	Total
1	I often believe I am paid a fair salary given my level of education and training	21 (8%)	46 (18%)	95 (36%)	99 (38%)	0 (0%)	261 (100%)
2	Given the responsibilities that I have in school I sometimes believe that what I receive as payment is just.	29 (11%)	39 (15%)	92 (35%)	101 (39%)	0 (0%)	261 (100%)
3	I often feel that I am fairly paid given my years of teaching experience	20 (8%)	40 (15%)	98 (38%)	85 (33%)	18 (7%)	261 (100%)
4	I am often paid an extra income for teaching overtime and for extra duties	14 (5%)	39 (15%)	82 (31%)	121 (46%)	5 (2%)	261 (100%)
5	I usually produce good results but I do not receive any motivation aside from my regular salary	73 (28%)	67 (26%)	72 (28%)	45 (17%)	4 (2%)	261 (100%)
6	I do not receive motivation in any form or appreciation despite the stress I undergo as a teacher.	45 (17%)	86 (33%)	78 (30%)	51 (20%)	1 (0%)	261 (100%)
Summary		202 (13%)	317 (20%)	517 (33%)	502 (32%)	28 (2%)	1566 (100%)

The above table presents the frequency distribution of responses on the items regarding distributive justice. Reporting the collapsed findings of the table taking “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” as “Agree” while “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree” are taken as “Disagree,” most respondents believed that they were not paid a fair salary given their level of education making 191 (73%) disagreement while 67 (26%) agreed they were paid fair enough. Also, they disagreed that given their responsibilities in school they believed that their payment is just making 193 (74%) while 68 (25%) agreed. A majority 183 (72%) respondents disagreed to believing that they were properly paid given their years of experience while 60 (23%) agreed to believing that their payment was fair given their teaching experience.

Their overtime teaching and extra duties were not paid for as reflected in their disagreement as 203 (77%) disagreed and 53 (20%). Also, most respondents agreed that they did not receive any motivation aside the good results they produced making 140 (54%) while 117 (45%) agreed they did receive motivation aside their salary. Again, findings indicates that there was no clear decision if teachers were motivated despite their stress as there was 129 (50%) agreement and disagreement. As a summary, 65% of the responses were in disagreement to all the items and 33% were in agreement while 28 (2%) were zero responses. Thus, it could be concluded that the respondents were not satisfied with distributive justice in their school.

Table 2: Frequency of responses on the effect of distributive justice on teachers’ psychological well-being

SN	Items	SA	A	D	SD	No response	Total
7	I feel very satisfied with the salary that I receive as teacher	20 (8%)	28 (11%)	82 (31%)	126 (48%)	5 (2%)	261 (100%)
8	I have many unpaid responsibilities in school that keep me permanently stressed up.	55 (21%)	81 (31%)	86 (33%)	36 (14%)	3 (1%)	261 (100%)
9	Despite my many years in service, I have not benefitted from salary increment and I am unhappy	44 (17%)	51 (20%)	59 (23%)	101 (39%)	6 (2%)	261 (100%)
10	The Archdiocese often delays payments of salaries and this makes me very anxious.	78 (30%)	85 (33%)	50 (19%)	46 (18%)	2 (1%)	261 (100%)
11	There are no incentives or motivations for best performing teachers and this discourages hard work and completion	30 (11%)	67 (26%)	87 (33%)	73 (28%)	4 (2%)	261 (100%)
12	I am not registered with the CNPS and this puts me at risk.	72 (28%)	70 (27%)	67 (26%)	38 (15%)	14 (5%)	261 (100%)
13	I am compelled to join OPSEC against my will and this penalizes my salary.	75 (29%)	68 (26%)	62 (24%)	46 (18%)	10 (4%)	261 (100%)
14	The Archdiocese often cuts salaries as sanctions for absences that are not teacher's faults such as the case of lockdowns	53 (20%)	47 (18%)	66 (25%)	90 (34%)	5 (2%)	261 (100%)
Summary		427 (20%)	497 (24%)	559 (27%)	556 (27%)	49 (2%)	2088 (100%)

Table 2 above presents the frequency distribution of responses on the effect of distributive justice on teachers' psychological well-being. Specifically, it can be noticed that 208 (79%) respondents disagreed that they were satisfied with the salary they were paid. Findings indicates that up to 136 (52%) agreed that they had unpaid responsibilities which kept them permanently stressed. Also, findings indicates that 95 (37%) of the respondents agreed to being unhappy about not benefiting from salary increments and 160 (62%) disagreed. Similarly, findings indicates that up to 160 (61%) agreed that the Archdiocese often delays payments of salaries which made them anxious and only 96 (37%) disagreed. 97 (37%) of the respondents

agreed that there are no incentives or motivation for best performing teachers which discourages hard work and completion and 160 (61%) disagreed. Findings equally indicates that 142 (55%) agreed they were not registered with the CNPS which made them be at risk and 105 (41%) disagreed. 143 (55%) of the respondents agreed that they were compelled to join OPSEC against their will while 108 (42%) disagreed. Again, 100 (38%) teachers agreed that their salaries are cut for absences that are not teacher's faults such as the case of lockdowns and 156 (59%) disagreed. Regarding the overall agreement, 46% of the responses were in agreement and 54% in disagreement while 49 (2%) were no response.

Assumption for measurement of Distributive Justice and the Psychological Well-being of Teachers

Table 3: Correlation of Distributive Justice and the Psychological Well-being of Teachers

	N	Mean	SD	Pearson cor.	P-value
Distributive justice	261	12.62	3.16	-0.02	0.708
Effect of distributive justice	261	18.67	3.14		

Table 3 presents the correlation of distributive justice and the psychological well-being of teachers. This was to measure the independence of observations to make sure that they were not highly correlated and that observations were not related to each other. It can be noticed that the Pearson correlation was at -0.020 with a p-value of 0.708 which indicates that there was no relationship between distributive justice and the psychological well-being of teachers, implying that an increase in distributive justice will lead to no significant change in the psychological well-being of the respondents.

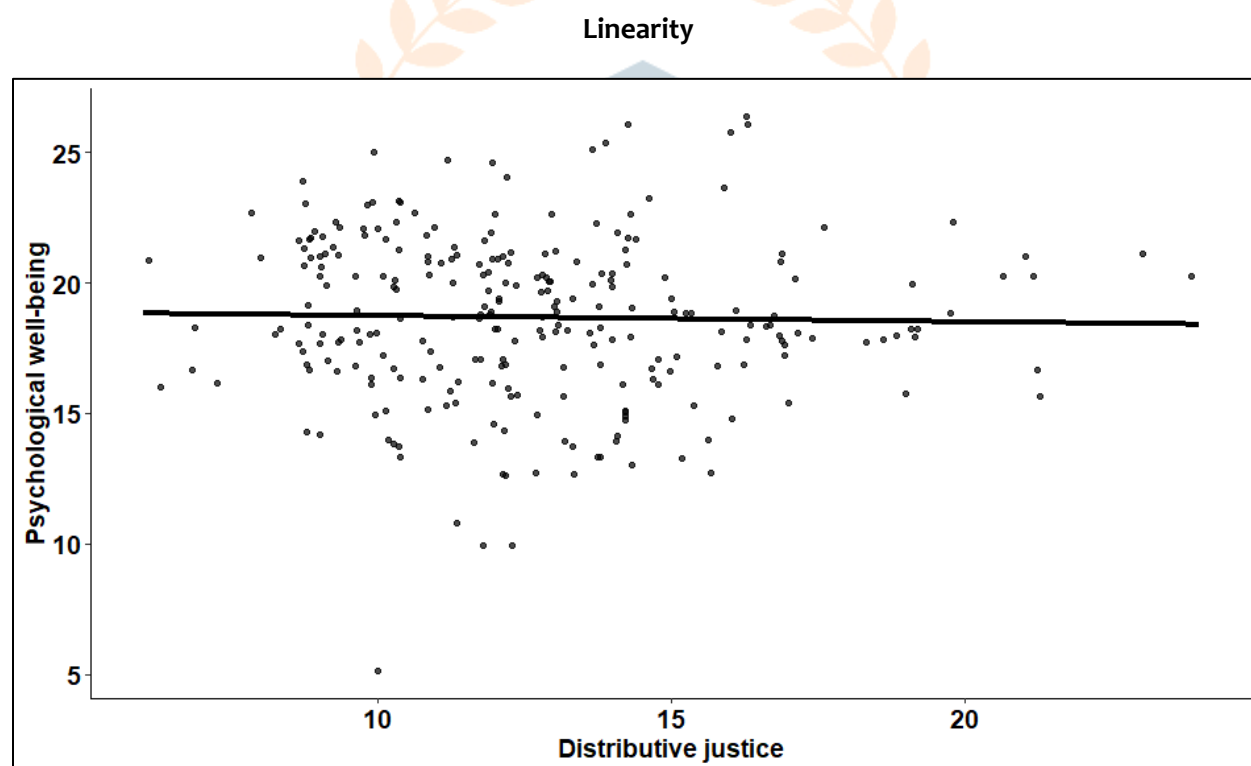


Figure 1: Scatter diagram of Distributive Justice and Psychological well-being of teachers

As noticed on the diagram above the scores were linearly distributed and the linear regression was appropriate for the measurement of the hypothesis between distributive justice and the psychological

well-being of teachers. Again, on the scattered diagram, it can be noticed that the line is almost straight indicating that there was no significant

relationship between distributive justice and the mental wellbeing of teachers.

Hypothesis

Table 4: Regression Results of Distributive Justice and Psychological well-being of Teachers

	Estimate	Std. Error	t-value	P-value	Confidence interval	
					Lower	Upper
Psychological well-being	18.963	0.804	23.592	0.000	17.380	20.546
Distributive justice	-0.023	0.062	-0.375	0.708	-0.145	0.098

Residual standard error: 3.15 on 259 degrees of freedom

Multiple R-squared: 0.001, Adjusted R-squared: -0.003

F-statistic: 0.141 on 1 and 259 DF, p-value: 0.708

Table 4 presents the findings of the effect of distributive justice on the psychological well-being of the teachers. As seen on the table, the estimate indicated that for every 100 unit increase in distributive justice, the psychological well-being of teachers decreased by 2.3 units and this was not statistically significant ($p = 0.708$). Thus, the null hypothesis was retained and it was concluded that distributive justice has no significant effect on the psychological well-being of teachers of the Archdiocese of Bamenda.

DISCUSSION

Distributive justice and the psychological well-being of teachers of the Archdiocese of Bamenda

The findings revealed that the majority of respondents were not satisfied with distributive justice within the Bamenda Archdiocesan Catholic Education Agency specifically on the subject of remunerations. Majority of respondents tended to perceive the wages they receive as incommensurate to their work input and teaching experience. They also tended to perceive the lack of financial incentives for extra duties and overtime work and the general absence of motivation for teacher performance as unfair. This finding has

significant implications within the backdrop of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs theory. Petit salaries for full time permanent teachers in a context of rising cost of commodities has the potential to truncate teachers' financial ability to sufficiently afford their basic needs and those of their dependents; hence, such small salary sizes are a risk factor of increasing vulnerability for the teachers and their dependents.

The perception by teachers of the Catholic Education Agency of Bamenda Archdiocese that their salaries are unfair (implying a lack of optimum distributive justice towards teachers in the agency) equally has implications for their safety needs, belonging needs and esteem needs. In terms of safety, it undercuts their ability to sustainably afford accommodation that provides good security. This is supported by data from qualitative findings as some teachers reported that they are regularly unable to be up to date with their rents and thus constantly in conflict with their landlords, and that some of them are unable to construct houses of their own because they don't earn enough and cannot save enough. With respect to belongingness, it affects teachers' capacity to socialize with peers. In fact, some participants reported that since they hardly have sufficient income to survive on,

they rarely hang out with their peers or accept invitations to hang out with peers as they will not be able to foot bills on such outings and they don't want to always be at the receiving end. This also indicates that their low salaries (unfair rewards), not only undermine their affordability but also their esteem.

The dissatisfaction registered by teachers on these distributive unfair practices validate the assumption of the reactive content theories namely that people will respond to unfair relationships by displaying certain negative emotions such as resentment, anger, dissatisfaction, disappointment and unhappiness (Folger, 1984). It also validates John Stacey Adams' (1963) equity theory in which he proposed that an employee's motivation is affected by whether the employee believes that their employment benefits/rewards are at least equal to the amount of the effort that they put into their work. Reactive content theories argue that in attempting to redress the experienced inequity, employees will seek restitution, engage in retaliatory behaviour or restore psychological equity by justifying the injustice or leaving the organisation. The findings of this study confirmed this assumption as all the teachers who expressed dissatisfaction with the state of distributive justice in the agency suggested measures to be taken by the agency to address distributive injustices such as salary increments, regularization of their CNPS contributions and payment of owed arrears and subventions which are all attempt at seeking restitution.

Adams' equity theory argues that underpaid workers are less productive and less satisfied than equitably paid workers and that in order for equity to be perceived, perceived inputs must equate perceived outputs such as: salary, bonus, prizes, recognition of the employee's contribution, positive work appraisals,

work promotions, pension, employer flexibility, and annual leave among others. Within the current study, teachers partly expressed their dissatisfaction with their pay packages by comparing them with those of their counterparts in other education agencies. This finding validates the social exchange theory proposition that a person's feelings of inequity and reactions to inequity result not from comparisons made to a specific other person (referred to as a "local comparison"), but from comparisons to a generalized other (referred to as a "referential comparison"), such as an occupational group. It also agrees with the relative deprivation theory's assumption argument that certain reward distribution patterns will encourage people to make certain social comparisons, which will lead to feelings of deprivation and resentment, causing a variety of reactions ranging from depression through the outbreak of violent riots (Martin, 1981).

Although findings from this study regarding respondents' perception of distributive justice show that majority of teachers within the Catholic Education Agency of the Archdiocese of Bamenda are dissatisfied with the level of distributive justice within the agency, the Pearson correlation of distributive justice and the psychological well-being of teachers was at -0.020 with a p-value of 0.708 indicating that there was no significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of distributive justice and their psychological well-being as the null hypothesis was retained. These findings are in tandem with those of Jaja et al. (2021) who found that distributive justice had no significant effect on teacher engagement and no significant effect on teachers' wellbeing. It could thus be argued that employee perceptions of distributive justice in the workplace do not necessarily have a direct effect on the psychological wellbeing of employees especially when other moderating factors are present. This is

supported by Salwa (2009) who found that in spite of workers reporting a perceived lack of distributive justice, the availability of coworker support moderated and weakened the relationship between workers' perceptions of distributive justice and their psychological distress.

Thus, in the present study, teachers' perceptions of distributive justice were not a significant predictor of their psychological wellbeing. This is contrary to Magnavita et al. (2022) who found that procedural justice was a significant predictor of occupational stress as well as to Gim & Mat (2014) who found that employee perceptions of distributive justice significantly affects employee affective commitment within an organization. These variations in findings on the effects of distributive justice on employee psychological factors suggest that contextual factors such as alternative income sources, limited opportunities, and personal factors such as employee resilience, intrinsic motivation, love for the job, level of self-efficacy etc. contribute to shaping the ways and degree to which perceptions of distributive justice influence individuals' psychological wellbeing.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed that the majority of respondents were not satisfied with distributive justice within the Bamenda Archdiocesan Catholic Education Agency specifically on the subject of remunerations. Majority of respondents tended to perceive the wages they receive as incommensurate to their work input and teaching experience. Disruptive justice within the mission school system reveals the prevailing tendency to perceive teachers as people with limited rights but with plenty of obligations towards the employer. Teachers of confessional schools in Cameroon are often underpaid yet required endure a lot of abuses from their employers including overloading for little

pay, overtime work for no pay, and often do not receive any appreciation and motivation. Yet a critical reflection on the reality indicates that without the services daily rendered by teachers to the schools and learners with whom they work, the employers alone cannot realize the goals.

Disruptive justice as a concept is theoretically easy to comprehend. However, in practice, it is often difficult to realize it adequately in its essential dimensions. This challenge is significantly due to the tendency in humans to take unfair advantage of others. In almost every organization, there are norms regulating the justice relations between employers and employees. These norms are either set by the organizations themselves or can also be made an external regulating body charged with monitoring and regulating relations between employers and employees in order to ensure fairness. However, in Cameroon in particular, private sector employers tend to have an exaggerated disregard for disruptive justice.

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