

Fair Treatment And Organisational Citizenship Behavior in Higher Learning Institutions In Kabale, Uganda

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on fair treatment and Organizational Citizenship Behavior within selected higher education institutions in Kabale District, Uganda. There is increasing concern over staff limited cooperation among colleagues, reluctance to take initiative, and low commitment to institutional goals. This study seeks To examine the relationship between fair treatment and Organisational Citizenship Behavior among institutions of higher learning in Kabale District. For the sake of achieving the objective of this study the study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design and also utilized a quantitative approach for data collection, management, and analysis and a sample size of 235 respondents were be drawn from the total study population of 269 individuals. The study's findings revealed that there is a relationship between fair treatment and organizational citizenship behaviour among Kabale District's higher education institutions. The study concluded that there is relationship between fair treatment and Organisational Citizenship Behavior among institutions of higher learning in Kabale District,. The study recommends that Institutions of higher learning in Kabale District should develop and implement clear policies and practices that promote fairness in treatment across all levels of staff, Institutions of higher learning in Kabale District

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive world, organizations are constantly trying their utmost limit to retain the best talent and outdo their competitors by doing the same things differently. Employees have become more aware of their rights and value the employer's sense of fairness and further expect and them to be fair or just at all times. Thus, fairness has become a prime aspect for organizations to take a deep look into - as it directly affects workplace attitudes and behaviour, organizational fairness is a determinant towards achieving Organization Citizenship Behavior. It describes the perception and understanding of fairness in the organization. Organizational fairness further explains why employees retaliate against inequitable outcomes or inappropriate process and interaction. It is against this background that this study seeks to investigate the effect of between Fair treatment and Organizational Citizenship Behavior among staff in higher institutions of learning in Kabale District, Uganda.

This study aims to explore the relationship between Fair treatment and Organizational Citizenship Behavior among staff in higher institutions of learning in Kabale District, Uganda. The study examined the extent to which fair treatment can explain the Organizational Citizenship Behavior of employees, particularly those in higher education who perform extra-role behaviors that go beyond formal job duties. Challenges such as limited academic research (NCHE, 2016), low engagement in community outreach (Sheilla, 2021), ethical issues, delayed marking and submission of student results due to staff holding multiple jobs (George Wilson Kasule et al., 2022; Rwothumio et al., 2021), and heavy workloads are significant factors. Additionally, poor quality customer care and teaching, irregular attendance, missed deadlines, and incomplete student assessments have been highlighted as areas of concern (Sheth et al., 2020; Muganga & Ssenkusu, 2019).

Organizational fairness refers to an employee's perception of whether an event or situation is morally right, which is defined by the ethics, religion, equity, fairness or law. It is thus a subjective concept, where one is less concerned with what is just and rather more concerned with what people think or believe is just. Researchers have adopted a descriptive paradigm to study and understand why employees might view certain situations or events to be labelled just or unjust. It is regarded as a personal evaluation about organizational conduct and moral standing. (Cropanzano et al., 2007).

Citizenship behaviors are voluntary actions that individuals control, often referred to as "supra-role behaviors" because they cannot be prescribed or required for a specific job. These behaviors include helping colleagues with job-related tasks, accepting directives without complaint, managing obstacles, maintaining an organized workspace, offering constructive feedback, fostering a positive work environment, and ensuring the organization's well-being (Aniisu, 2020).

Although the importance of fair treatment and Organizational Citizenship Behavior is widely acknowledged, there remains limited understanding of how these concepts interact within the specific context of Ugandan higher learning institutions. Much of the research on fair treatment and Organizational Citizenship Behavior has been conducted in Western settings, which may not fully reflect the socio-cultural and economic dynamics of Uganda. Despite efforts and opportunities provided to employees in higher education institutions, there remains a lack of commitment among staff, as reflected in their behavior. This persistent issue underscores the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing fair treatment and Organizational Citizenship Behavior within higher learning institutions in Kabale District.

There is increasing concern over staff disengagement, limited cooperation among colleagues, reluctance to take initiative, and low commitment to institutional goals. A study by Muwonge, Lubega, and Kasozi (2021) on public universities in Uganda highlighted that only 42% of academic staff showed consistent willingness to go beyond their formal job responsibilities. In Kabale District specifically, informal reports from institutional administrators point to frequent delays in program delivery, low involvement in co-curricular activities, and resistance to institutional changes—symptoms of diminished OCB.

The Government of Uganda, through the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) and the Ministry of Education and Sports, has developed several policy interventions aimed at strengthening human resource practices. These include staff capacity-building initiatives, institutional quality assurance frameworks, and performance-based reward systems (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2019). However, these measures have had limited impact, particularly in rural or upcountry institutions, due to inconsistent implementation, resource constraints, and inadequate institutional leadership. Several challenges remain unsolved, including poor recognition and reward systems, limited career advancement opportunities, weak organizational support, and the absence of participatory leadership styles (Tumwine, 2020). These issues can be attributed to a lack of alignment between policy and practice, budgetary limitations, and a culture of minimal compliance that does not promote voluntary, citizenship-like behaviours. If this study is not conducted, institutions in Kabale District may continue to face low employee engagement, poor service delivery, and institutional inefficiency, ultimately affecting the quality of education and student satisfaction. Additionally, the lack of empirical data on

Organizational Citizenship Behavior within this local context makes it difficult for policymakers and administrators to design effective strategies for improving staff morale and organizational performance.

The researcher was motivated to undertake this study after observing firsthand the challenges of low staff involvement and commitment within higher education institutions in Kabale. Furthermore, there is a limited body of research on Organizational Citizenship Behavior within rural Ugandan academic contexts, despite its recognized importance in enhancing institutional effectiveness and employee well-being. This study seeks to fill that gap by evaluating the factors influencing Organizational Citizenship Behavior and offering recommendations for improved human resource management in higher learning institutions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. theoretical framework

Social Exchange Theory (SET) posits that social life consists of a series of interactions and transactions between individuals or groups, where one party reciprocates positive actions from another (Gergen, 1969). The exchange process begins when an organization interacts with an individual, either positively or negatively.

SET has been used to explain employees' favorable attitudes toward their organization (Blau, 1964). The theory emphasizes that trust, loyalty, and commitment are developed through the interactions between the employee and the employer (Copanzano & Mitchell, 2005). When organizations provide the necessary resources, employees' satisfaction, engagement, and commitment tend to increase (Musgrove et al., 2014). In turn, employees reciprocate based on the benefits they have received (AbuKhalifeh & Som, 2013). Essentially, positive treatment creates a cycle of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). The reciprocity principle applies to both employers and employees, where improved pay, security, and intrinsic rewards lead to greater employee satisfaction and higher levels of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) (Organ, 1988; Bishop & Scott, 2000). The theory emphasizes that social exchanges between employees and employers are governed by norms of reciprocity in the workplace, where employees expect rewards in return for their efforts and contributions to the organization. When employees' social and emotional needs are met, and reward systems are effectively used, their motivation and efforts increase (Güven, 2018).

Social Exchange Theory (SET) is employed to analyze the social frameworks that regulate interactions between individuals and groups. It suggests that when employees receive favorable treatment from an organization, they are more inclined to reciprocate with positive behaviors, such as enhanced performance. Within the organization, voluntary reciprocation takes place when support is offered, establishing an obligation to return the favor (Ni Putu & Wayan, 2021).

According to Social Exchange Theory (SET), employees who perceive higher levels of organizational fairness and treatment from their organization are more likely to engage in Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) as a way of reciprocating. Employees and employers build reciprocal relationships to maximize mutual benefits. Employees who feel supported by their organization feel a sense of obligation to "repay" that support by engaging in behaviors that benefit the organization.

2.1. Fair treatment and organizational citizenship behavior

Fairness or justice perceptions refer to whether employees believe that organizational decisions are made fairly and with adequate input from employees (referred to as procedural justice), and whether they feel their rewards are equitable in relation to their training, tenure, responsibilities, or workload

(known as distributive justice). Perceptions of fairness are positively linked to Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) (Moorman, 1991). This term reflects individuals' views on the fairness of decisions and decision-making processes within an organization, and how these perceptions influence behavior. Organizational justice refers to employees' perceptions of whether the organization is fair or unfair. These perceptions are linked to critical factors such as commitment, citizenship behaviors, satisfaction, and performance.

In today's competitive environment, organizations strive to retain top talent and outperform competitors by finding new ways of doing things. Employees are increasingly aware of their rights and expect their employers to act justly and fairly at all times. As a result, fairness has become a crucial factor that organizations must focus on, as it directly influences workplace attitudes and behavior. Organizational justice is a key determinant of Organizational Citizenship Behavior, as it explains why employees may retaliate against unfair outcomes, processes, or interactions (Deww, 2011).

When employees perceive that they are treated fairly in all aspects by their organization, they are more likely to display positive attitudes and behaviors, such as increased job satisfaction. Issues such as the allocation of resources, hiring practices, policy-making, and decisions that affect both decision-makers and those impacted by those decisions require careful attention to fairness (Deww, 2011). The relationship between organizational fairness and OCB is seen as a potential explanation for how organizational justice affects OCB (Chhetri, 2014).

A study by Ehtesham and Muhammad (2011) explored the relationship between organizational justice and citizenship behavior in Pakistan. Using an exploratory research approach, they gathered primary data through questionnaires from 140 employees at the COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, including both male and female faculty members. Statistical analysis using regression and correlation revealed that involvement in decision-making was strongly correlated with consistency and adaptability. Additionally, other dimensions of organizational culture were positively related to performance management practices.

Najafi et al. (2011) examined the causal relationships between organizational justice, psychological empowerment, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and OCB, focusing on the mediating roles of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Their study, which surveyed 280 educational experts from universities, found that organizational justice directly influenced job satisfaction, psychological empowerment, and turnover intentions. Psychological empowerment positively influenced both job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which, in turn, positively affected OCB. The researchers concluded that organizational justice and psychological empowerment enhance job satisfaction and organizational commitment, ultimately improving OCB.

However, Batool (2013) found in a study of Pakistan's banking sector that organizational justice did not have a significant positive effect on OCB. Similarly, Gharagheieh and Shokri (2014) confirmed a significant positive relationship between organizational justice and OCB in a study conducted in Iran's Social Security Organization. In the context of educational organizations in Malaysia, research showed that fairness positively influenced teachers' OCB.

2.2. Organizational citizenship behavior

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) involves voluntary actions that go beyond the formal job requirements but have a positive impact on the organization. Such behaviors include assisting coworkers, being punctual, and exerting additional effort beyond the basic expectations. OCB is associated with better organizational performance, increased employee morale, and enhanced workplace harmony. These actions are not outlined in job descriptions, extend beyond formal roles, are not explicitly defined, do not incur penalties for unmet deadlines, and require employees to give more than what is expected of them.

Citizenship behaviors are voluntary actions that individuals control, often referred to as "supra-role behaviors" because they cannot be prescribed or required for a specific job. These behaviors include helping colleagues with job-related tasks, accepting directives without complaint, managing obstacles,

maintaining an organized workspace, offering constructive feedback, fostering a positive work environment, and ensuring the organization's well-being (Aniisu, 2020).

The concept of OCB is grounded in Organ's (1988) work, which identified five behavioral dimensions: altruism, civic virtue, conscientiousness, courtesy, and sportsmanship. These dimensions have been confirmed in subsequent research (Salehzadeh et al., 2015). In this study, OCB will be assessed based on these five dimensions.

Kabasiita, Bakkabulindi, and Onen (2021) suggested that OCB involves voluntary, informal assistance that an employee may choose to offer or withhold, without concern for punishment or formal rewards. OCB refers to discretionary actions that are not required or compensated by the organization. These behaviors contribute to sustaining the organization's social structure and provide indirect benefits to the workgroup or the organization overall

One key factor that can support an organization's success is the behavior of its employees. When an organization fosters a culture of good citizenship, employees are motivated to work harder and exceed expectations. These extra efforts enhance the company's reputation in the eyes of customers, leading to greater customer loyalty. This, in turn, results in improved financial performance for the company. Therefore, it is crucial for organizations to understand the factors that contribute positively to encouraging this type of behavior. Many organizations owe their current success to the dedicated and committed employees they have. Without good citizenship behavior, businesses may face challenges such as low productivity, poor product quality, inefficiency, low customer satisfaction, communication breakdowns, high costs, high turnover, absenteeism, decreased innovation, and a reduced chance of survival (Gnana, 2020).

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design research design to explore how Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) is conceptualized and its antecedents within management studies. As noted by Mpirirwe & Moses (2024), a descriptive design enables researchers to present and relate existing facts. Specifically, a descriptive cross-sectional survey design research design seeks to gather data to systematically describe a phenomenon, situation, or population. It is particularly useful for answering questions related to what, when, where, and how concerning the research problem (Agaba & Kalu, 2019). This approach can incorporate various research methods and primarily uses quantitative data (Dorothy *et.al*, 2024)). Given these objectives, the descriptive design is deemed suitable for this study (Agaba & Turyasingura, 2025)

3.2. Study Population

This study focused on higher education institutions in Kabale District. As of the end of 2023, these institutions employed a total of 269 staff members across various departments (Human Resource Departments and Payroll Records, 2023). This study was conducted in selected institutions in the district, including Uganda College of Commerce (UCC) with 87 employees, National Teachers College Kabale (NTC) with 90 employees, and Bishop Barham College University with 92 employees. Inferences were drawn from management at all levels (top, middle, and low) as well as other staff members from each department.

Table 3.1: Sample Size Determination and Sampling Procedure

Category of Respondents	Total population	Sample Size	Sampling criteria
Top Management	18	18	purposive

Administration	34	30	purposive
Academic	124	111	Random
Non -academic	93	76	Simple random
Total	269	235	

Source: *Researcher, based on Krejcie & Morgan (1970; Human Resource departmental report, 2024*

3.3. Research Instruments

A self-administered questionnaire were used, allowing participants to read and respond to the questions independently, without the need for an interviewer. This method is effective for collecting quantitative data from diverse populations in their natural environments. Questionnaires are advantageous for being time-efficient, cost-effective, and conducive to achieving a high response rate (Turyasingura & Agaba, 2023)). The structured questionnaires were employed a Likert scale with an ordinal range (e.g., 1-4), enabling respondents to select the option that best reflects their views. The Likert scale is particularly useful for assessing employees' opinions, attitudes, and behaviors regarding perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behavior, determining their level of agreement or satisfaction with specific statements.

3.4. Validity of instruments

3.4.1. Validity

According to Herbart *et.al*, (2025), validity is described as the extent to which a test accurately measures what it is designed to assess. The data collection tools were evaluated for both face and content validity. To ensure face validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by supervisors who were provided by expert's feedback on its items, including the questionnaire and interview guide. Based on their comments, the researcher revised the tools by adjusting, rephrasing, or eliminating irrelevant items. Expert judgment plays a crucial role in research assessment (Kyabarongo, *et.al*, (2024). After refining the tools for face validity, they undergo a content validity test. The tools were deemed valid if their Content Validity Index (CVI) exceeds 0.7, as recommended by Turyasingura, et.al, (2023). The CVI for the questionnaire was calculated using the following formula:

$$C.V.I = \frac{\text{Number of items declared valid}}{\text{Total number of items}}$$

3.4.2. Reliability

Reliability refers to the degree to which an instrument consistently produces stable results over time (Agaba & Mpirirwe Christine, 2023).). To ensure reliability, the researcher conducted a pre-test of the instrument with five employees, and the pre-test results were analyzed using SPSS Version 23. During the reliability test, Cronbach's alpha values was generated through SPSS to evaluate the consistency of the tools. The instruments were considered reliable if the alpha values for the test items or constructs exceed 0.7.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Response rate

Response rate is the ratio of the actual number of respondents, vis-à-vis the targeted. The researcher had targeted to get information from the various respondents and got the following.

Table 4.1. showing the actual response rate from respondents.

Respondents	Proposed sample	Actual sample	Percentage
Top Management	18	18	100
Administration	34	30	100
Academic	124	111	90%
Non -academic	93	76	82
	269	235	93

Source: Field data 2025

4.2. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

This section presents the results for respondents' age, gender, level of education, and number of years in the workforce. Working in the Kabale District of respondents, all of whom were deemed critical to the study.

4.2.1. Age of respondents

Age-related categories were used to group respondents. The distribution of respondents by age is shown in the frequency table (table 4.1).

Table 4. 2: Age of respondents

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	18-30	36	15.3
	31-40	45	19.1
	41&above	154	65.6
	Total	235	100.0

The majority of respondents (65.6%) were over the age of 41 or older, followed by those between the ages of 31 and 40 (19.1%) and those aged 18 to 30 (15.3%). All respondents were mature enough to understand the relationship between Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) in selected higher institutions of learning in Kabale District.

4.3. Gender of respondents

Table 4. 3: Showing gender of respondents

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Female	40	17.1
	Male	195	82.9
	Total	235	100.0

Source: Field data 2025

According to Table 3, men outnumbered women by 17.1%, with 82.9% responding. This indicates that men make up the majority of the workforce in Kabale District's higher education institutions. This suggests that men in Kabale District's higher education institutions have a good understanding of the relationship between perceived organizational support (POS) and organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB).

4.4. Level of education

Respondents were categorized according to their level of education.

Table 4.4: Level of education

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Diploma	93	39.6
	Degree	102	43.4
	Postgraduate	40	17
	Total	235	100.0

Source. Data from the field 2025

According to Table 4.4, the majority of respondents (43.4%) held a degree, followed by diplomas (39.6%) and postgraduate degrees (17%). This indicates that the research subjects had the necessary educational background to comprehend the questions and provide precise responses to better understand the relationship between Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) in Kabale District's higher learning institutions.

4.3. The relationship between fair treatment and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour among institutions of higher learning in Kabale District.

Table 4. 5: Correlation analysis fair treatment and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour among institutions of higher learning in Kabale District“

		Organisational Citizenship Behaviour	fair treatment
Organisational Citizenship Behaviour	Pearson	1	.662**
	Correlation	.000	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	235	235
	N		1
Fair treatment	Pearson	.662**	
	Correlation	.000	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	235	235
	N		

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

Source: Primary Data 2025

The data in Table 4.5 shows a strong positive correlation between Fair Treatment and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB), with a correlation coefficient of $r = .662$. This means that when employees perceive they are being treated fairly—such as being respected, valued, and equitably

rewarded—they are more likely to engage in positive voluntary behaviours that support the organization, like helping coworkers, showing initiative, and being loyal. The p-value of less than 0.01 ($p < 0.01$) indicates that this correlation is statistically significant at the 1% level. This means there is a very low likelihood (less than 1%) that this observed relationship occurred by chance.

5. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between fair treatment and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) in selected higher learning institutions within Kabale District.

5.2.1. The relationship between fair treatment and Organisational Citizenship behaviour among institutions of higher learning in Kabale District

The objective of this study was to examine the relationship between fair treatment and Organisational Citizenship behaviour among institutions of higher learning in Kabale District. The results of the data collection and analysis revealed that the two variables had a significant and favorable connection. Qualitative findings showed the relationship between fair treatment and Organisational Citizenship behaviour among institutions of higher learning in Kabale District

This is in agreement Moorman, (1991) who noted that, fairness or justice perceptions refer to whether employees believe that organizational decisions are made fairly and with adequate input from employees (referred to as procedural justice), and whether they feel their rewards are equitable in relation to their training, tenure, responsibilities, or workload (known as distributive justice). Perceptions of fairness are positively linked to Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) This term reflects individuals' views on the fairness of decisions and decision-making processes within an organization, and how these perceptions influence behavior. Organizational justice refers to employees' perceptions of whether the organization is fair or unfair. These perceptions are linked to critical factors such as commitment, citizenship behaviors, satisfaction, and performance.

In today's competitive environment, organizations strive to retain top talent and outperform competitors by finding new ways of doing things. Employees are increasingly aware of their rights and expect their employers to act justly and fairly at all times. As a result, fairness has become a crucial factor that organizations must focus on, as it directly influences workplace attitudes and behavior. Organizational justice is a key determinant of Organizational Citizenship Behavior, as it explains why employees may retaliate against unfair outcomes, processes, or interactions (Deww, 2011).

When employees perceive that they are treated fairly in all aspects by their organization, they are more likely to display positive attitudes and behaviors, such as increased job satisfaction. Issues such as the allocation of resources, hiring practices, policy-making, and decisions that affect both decision-makers and those impacted by those decisions require careful attention to fairness (Deww, 2011). The relationship between organizational fairness and OCB is seen as a potential explanation for how organizational justice affects OCB (Chhetri, 2014). A study by Ehtesham and Muhammad (2011) explored the relationship between organizational justice and citizenship behavior in Pakistan. Using an exploratory research approach, they gathered primary data through questionnaires from 140 employees at the COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, including both male and female faculty members. Statistical analysis using regression and correlation revealed that involvement in decision-making was strongly correlated with consistency and adaptability. Additionally, other dimensions of organizational culture were positively related to performance management practices.

6. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that there is relationship between fair treatment and Organisational Citizenship Behavior among institutions of higher learning in Kabale District. This is in line with the findings,

which were supported by the majority of respondents. Therefore, Leadership and human resource departments should regularly assess fairness perceptions through staff feedback and address concerns promptly to maintain a positive and productive organizational climate.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

In relation to the analysis, findings, and conclusion, guided by the study objectives, the following recommendations have been proposed.

Institutions of higher learning in Kabale District should develop and implement clear policies and practices that promote fairness in treatment across all levels of staff. This includes ensuring transparent communication, equitable distribution of resources, consistent application of rules, and inclusive decision-making processes. By fostering a culture of fairness, institutions can enhance employees' perception of justice, which in turn is likely to strengthen Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), such as altruism, conscientiousness, and civic virtue.

Leadership and human resource departments should regularly assess fairness perceptions through staff feedback and address concerns promptly to maintain a positive and productive organizational

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