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Abstract: When members of mission organizations perceive injustice within their organization, they work less effectively and attrition is more likely. This paper examines various types of organizational justice (distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational) which need to be monitored and maximized to help mission organizations accomplish their goals.

Missionaries live in a world of organizations. They are members of sending organizations from their home countries. They form organizations among themselves on the field. Their goal is often to create organizations for the people whom they serve, such as churches or training centers. At other times they wish to serve existing organizations run by national leaders. Many are accountable to and dependent upon another set of organizations in their sending countries, the local churches that support them.

Although the Bible gives far more information concerning the way individuals should act than the way organizations should act, the actions of organizations immensely influence missionaries and the people whom they serve. How these actions are perceived by individuals within the organization is the subject of a relatively young field within the behavioral sciences known as *organizational justice*, the systematic study of the causes and effects of the perception of fairness and unfairness within an organization (Colquitt et al. 2001; Folger 1977; Lind and Tyler 1988).

Organizational justice is both similar to and different from God's justice or righteousness. Both deal with what is believed to be right, fair, and just. God's justice, however, examined from a theological point of view, is defined by God, has its source in him, and is revealed by him. It is immutable and is a trustworthy measure for judging the value of our own behavior. We are called to be righteous (Matt. 5:48), but inevitably fall short (Rom. 3:23). Through faith in Jesus Christ and because of his work on the cross, the righteousness of God is imputed to us (Rom. 3:21–22). This righteousness is very different from what is meant by organizational justice, which is defined from a psychological point of view. Organizational justice measures the degree to which an individual perceives an action within an organization (by a hierarchical superior, a peer, or "the system") to be fair or unfair. Whether the action is actually fair or unfair (which from a Christian point of view would be defined by God's righteousness) is not what is being examined, however important that may be.

What is examined is the perception of fairness or unfairness, the cause of this perception, and the effect of the perception.

Compared to God's justice, organizational justice may seem trivial. Good reasons exist, however, for systematically studying it. First and perhaps foremost is that we can actually measure organizational justice (the perceived fairness of the behavior of individuals) and its effects. Neither theologians nor psychologists would attempt to measure empirically the degree to which individuals in an organization behave in accordance with God's righteousness and measure the consequences. Justice by God's standard is internal to an individual (Matt. 15:18–20) and is not easily measured by an outside observer. How would you feel if your mission announced that it was going to measure the righteousness of each of its missionaries? Closer to home, how many of us would think that we ourselves are good judges of how we personally measure up to God's justice? If others cannot measure how just we are, could we do it ourselves, say on a scale ranging from "filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6) to "holy and faithful" (Col. 1:2)? We rejoice that this is an issue that God has dealt with by sending his Son. But organizational justice is another question. We can very easily ask people, "On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means very unfair and 10 means perfectly fair, how fair do you think that such and such a decision was?" They may be completely wrong in their judgment, due to biases, misperceptions, and a lack of information, but their feelings are real, and those feelings have real causes and consequences.

For example, empirical research has shown that when the perception of organizational justice is high, people are more willing to serve in the organization and to strive to accomplish its goals (Brockner and Wiesenfeld 1996). This willingness becomes especially apparent when negative events occur within an organization, such as interpersonal conflict, a failed program, or a loss of financial resources (all of which occur fairly regularly in missionary efforts). When perceptions of organizational justice are high, members are much more likely to take negative events in stride. But when organizational justice is perceived to be lacking, negative events are likely to evoke strongly negative reactions, sometimes leading to attrition of members. My purpose in this chapter is to describe the various dimensions of organizational justice that have been discovered, to present the results of empirical studies indicating what consequences can be expected when organizational justice is not present, and to suggest ways that mission organizations can make sure that their ministry is characterized by a high level of organizational justice.

The Difficulty of Seeing Missionary Injustices

By God's grace, instances of egregious organizational injustice within mission agencies are not overly common. Most of the time mission organizations make good decisions that promote the spread of the Gospel, the well-being of their members, and the well-being of the people whom they serve. By and large missionaries and their organizations strive to be fair in their dealings with one another and with others. But occasionally things can go wrong, horribly wrong. Situations arise in which missionaries are perceived by the people with whom they work to be incredibly unfair. National workers may feel abused by their missionary employers when they compare their salaries to what other missions pay. A missionary may feel unfairly treated if asked to resign and no meaningful reason is provided. Loss of funding for a project for which missionaries

have sacrificed a good part of their lives may lead to accusations that those cutting the funding are unfair, which in turn may cause contributors of funds to feel unappreciated and unfairly treated by the missionaries.

These problems are compounded by the fact that as humans we tend to be biased in our perceptions of fairness. We can recognize unfairness very quickly in others, but it is difficult to recognize it in ourselves. A study of fifty-four nations (Park, Peterson, and Seligman 2004, 2006) indicates that throughout the world most people see themselves as being very fair; on a scale of 1 to 5, most people rate themselves at around 4.0. For most countries 4.0 is a higher score than people give themselves for honesty, love, humor, or social skills. Since we see ourselves as being fair in our outlook and dealings, a lack of fairness tends to be a problem that we see, not in ourselves, but in others.

Part of the reason we believe ourselves to be so fair is due to our biases. One of our most common biases is known as the *fundamental attribution error* (Ross 1977). When we see something go wrong, we tend to attribute the difficulty to a cause. Research has shown that people tend to be biased when making this attribution. When we see things go wrong in the life of someone else, we tend to attribute the problems primarily to the person's personality or character traits or to choices that the person has made. If something goes wrong in our own lives, however, we tend to attribute the problem to circumstances around us that have made the situation inevitable. For example, if someone is late for an appointment with us, we might come to the conclusion that the person is lazy, disorganized, or uncaring. But if we are late for an appointment, we tend to believe that it is because of traffic problems, some important issue that came up, or any of a

myriad of other possible hindrances. Therefore, when someone does an injustice to us, we easily come to the conclusion that the person is unfair. If we do an injustice to someone else, however, we tell ourselves that we did not really have any choice due to the circumstances or that the person deserved it because of his or her own actions. Even though we tend to see unfairness on the part of others as an expression of their character, we do not view ourselves as intrinsically unfair, because we tend to see the reasons for the problem as being exterior to ourselves.

Our biases may prevent us from seeing what other people perceive as being unjust. Wikipedia, under "List of Cognitive Biases" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cognitive_biases), offers descriptions of a number of such biases, such as confirmation bias, status quo bias, the false consensus effect, and the Lake Wobegon effect. Each can prevent us from recognizing our own acts of unfairness or from seeing why others might perceive what we do as unfair. Fortunately, though our acts of unfairness are difficult for us to see, with God's grace we may be able to learn to recognize them and even to rectify them.

Four Types of Organizational Justice

A typology of injustices will be helpful for understanding perceptions of fairness or unfairness in organizational settings such as missions, churches, and parachurch agencies. Organizational scientists use four categories of organizational justice—distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational—to classify perceptions regarding the fairness or unfairness of various actions taken within organizations (Colquitt 2001; Colquitt et al. 2001). Not only do these classifications allow us to understand why some actions are considered

unfair, but empirical studies also indicate what type of reaction can likely be expected when one or another of the types of organizational justice is perceived to be low. As will be seen, a lack of organizational justice has many negative consequences.

Distributive Justice

James 5:1–6 condemns rich, unfair employers who do not pay their employees what they deserve. Such stinginess is an example of a lack of distributive justice arising from a perceived—and in this case real—lack of fairness in how the outcomes of invested labor are distributed. Employees expect to receive the wage for which they have a contract either in writing or by convention. When they work and do not reap the expected benefits, they feel cheated. But questions of distributive justice are not always so clear cut.

What should missionaries receive in return for their work? God will certainly grant them heavenly rewards, but in the meantime most would probably like to eat regularly and maybe even send their children to college. In the missionary setting, distributive justice is a complicated issue, and it becomes even more so if we ask to what degree faith missions are responsible for missionary salaries. In determining what constitutes fair outcomes for the work that employees or agents provide an organization, three allocation rules come into play. Unlike most organizations, missions tend to use a combination of all three.

The first allocation rule is *equality*, whereby all members of an organization receive the same amount. To a certain degree, many missions follow the rule of equality in setting salaries. There may be differences due to seniority rules, cost of living adjustments, or bonuses for being on administrative staff, but the salary range in most mission agencies is far narrower than in the great majority of other organizations, both Christian and, especially, secular.

The second rule focuses on *needs*. Missionaries tend to have a salary that is high enough to carry on a ministry in both the United States and their country of service, but lower than what they could make in their home culture in a secular job. Their salary level ensures that they have enough to live on; it also ensures that getting rich is not a motivating factor in deciding to become a missionary. Missionaries who work in countries with a high cost of living or who have more children needing health insurance and bedrooms have greater needs; therefore, they may receive a higher salary and more benefits than others who do not have such needs.

The third allocation rule, the one followed by most Christian and secular organizations but less by faith missions, is called *equity*. This rule says that what one receives should be in proportion to what one contributes. For example, an engineer is expected to contribute more to the success of an organization than a file clerk, so the engineer will receive a higher salary. Although never stated publicly, especially in promotional materials, this rule probably comes into play in the lives of most missionaries, but only in the context of fund-raising. Missionaries who have a very successful ministry leading people to Christ, starting churches, building hospitals, feeding the poor, or doing whatever their ministry consists of will probably find raising funds easier and will be more likely to receive full support than will missionaries who encounter one failure after another. If that is so, the missionaries' salaries will be somewhat proportional to what they contribute to the organization. Similarly, missionaries who are good fund-raisers (e.g., those who are able to turn even their failures

into appealing and exciting prayer letters) will probably be more likely to be fully supported than those who are not similarly gifted. These examples show how a skill that is useful to an organization, in this case, a mission agency, is rewarded proportionately to its level.

But salary is not the only reward that missionaries receive for their services. There are also intangible rewards, even beyond the heavenly rewards promised by God. Perhaps the most influential of these for most missionaries is the internal sense of well-being that comes from doing what they believe God has called them to do. Another intangible reward is the appreciation or esteem that they receive from other Christians. Rightly or wrongly, missionaries and their families are held up as examples of what it means to be committed to Christ and to serve God. Other people may feel good about themselves because of material goods they possess or because they drive a Lexus or BMW; missionaries can feel good about themselves because people in their sending churches remind them that they are doing the right thing, although they may be driving a car that most of their supporters would not be able to identify. Other rewards include the support and encouragement of colleagues and mission administrators. Missionary work thus offers both tangible and intangible rewards.

When the "needs" and "equity" rules do not appear to be followed, a feeling of a lack of distributive justice occurs. Certainly, if people do not receive what they believe they need so as to live at a minimally sufficient level, they will feel that their organization is being unfair. Needs are basic and must be met. But lack of equity will also cause a sense of injustice. If a missionary makes what he or she considers to be a significant contribution to the organization but does not receive adequate rewards (such as support and encouragement from colleagues or administrators), she or he will feel unappreciated and may experience a sense of injustice. Many studies show what occurs when people suffer a lack of distributive justice, especially when there is a lack of equity. The results are described by *equity theory* (Adams, 1965), which states that a perceived mismatch between inputs and outputs will lead to changes in people's inputs or in their perceptions so as to bring about equity. People who contribute more than what they believe their rewards are worth tend to contribute less over time. For example, suppose a widget factory pays its best worker (who makes ten widgets per day) the same as its pays average workers (who make five widgets per day). Very likely the best worker will feel undervalued and treated unfairly. This worker is also likely to reduce his level of effort and eventually to make fewer widgets per day. If, however, the worst workers (who are currently making two widgets per day) are paid the same as the average workers, they are likely either to feel guilty about not contributing enough to the organization (and to try to produce more widgets) or to change their perceptions about their work and to justify their high salary by telling themselves that they merit it for one reason or another (their widgets are higher quality, they contribute to the work atmosphere, they encourage others, and so on). In any case, the feelings evoked by being underpaid tend to be much stronger than those for being overpaid.

On a practical level, studies of employees who believe they are suffering distributive injustice (Colquitt et al. 2001) indicate that they are, in general, less satisfied with their job, more likely to call in sick, more likely to steal from their employer (believing that this balances out the injustice), and more likely to leave the organization. In addition, the quality of their work goes down. For missions, this means

that it is important for missionaries to receive sufficient support and salary. Although it might seem "spiritual" for missionaries to say that they do not need to be fully supported, it is in the interest of both the mission and the missionaries to require a minimum level of support that meets the missionaries' needs and that ensures that they feel they are being treated fairly. But salary is not the only remuneration that a mission can give missionaries. The support and encouragement of administrators and colleagues can counterbalance a salary that is considered to be low for the work provided. Support and encouragement do not come naturally when everybody has an individual agenda and a personal set of priorities. For this reason, mission leaders must consciously structure their priorities to include support and encouragement of missionary staff and colleagues. It may be easier to criticize than to affirm and encourage, but criticism of those who feel under rewarded and insufficiently appreciated is quite likely to lead to attrition rather than improvement.

Procedural Justice

When King Solomon commanded that a baby be cut in two, the true mother responded in outrage (1 Kings 3:16–28). From a distributive justice point of view, such a decision might be considered just (but most likely not). The process by which the decision was made, however, was inherently unfair. The true mother (and the baby) would suffer an irreparable and unbearable loss, and thus responded in outrage to the mere thought of it. Solomon recognized this outrage as coming from a sense of injustice and was thus able to identify the true mother. In much the same way, organizations need to be sensitive to cries of outrage coming from their members.

Not all complaints are justified, but even so, they need to be given a fair hearing. Whenever a decision is made in an organization, people can be expected to respond negatively if they think the process of decision making was biased or unfair. Perceptions of favoritism during budget setting, perceptions of unwillingness to hear another missionary's point of view, or perceptions that not all the available information has been taken into consideration in decision making—all such situations are likely to be interpreted as lacking in procedural justice.

Suppose that missionary John Dutiful has begun attending a church started by a young national church planter. His intent is to provide stability and support to the new congregation and to encourage the church planter. But missionary Dutiful does not really enjoy the church. He does not live near it, he and his wife are not significantly integrated into the community, and they have to get up early to get there on Sunday morning. The national church planter is a gifted pastoral leader, which means that many of Dutiful's gifts cannot be used. Nevertheless Dutiful continues to attend because he feels it to be his duty. Now, Dutiful also happens to be on the committee that places new missionaries in ministries. About a year ago a young, single missionary, Jack Young, came to the field, integrated into a church with other people his age, and learned the language remarkably quickly. Somehow Dutiful gets the idea that it would be a good idea for Young to replace him at the church plant he and his wife have been attending. This idea might be coming from God—or maybe not. Such a decision needs to be examined carefully and with sensitivity to all parties involved. Dutiful might be able to convince the placement committee that the assignment is a good idea, but if Young is against it (perhaps he feels God is calling

him to stay at his present ministry because he has developed solid relationships), he will likely perceive any decision to redeploy him to the new church as unjust. If, however, Young and Dutiful meet together (perhaps along with the placement committee), discuss all the issues involved (even the delicate ones), and make sure that they understand each other's point of view, whatever decision is made will likely be accepted more willingly, even if one of the missionaries would have preferred another outcome.

Studies of procedural justice have shown six elements to be essential for a decision to be perceived as just, especially when at least one party is adversely affected by the consequences of the decision (Colquitt et al. 2001; Leventhal 1976). If any one of these six elements is missing, decisions that adversely affect a member of an organization quite possibly will be perceived as being unjust.

Decisions must take into account the opinions of all parties involved. Even if I do not like the outcome of a decision, if I know that my point of view has been heard and understood, I will be more likely to accept the decision. This is called the "voice effect." If missionaries, national employees, short-term workers, and church members are able to express their point of view on an issue, and know that they have been heard, it is much more likely that they will perceive the final decision as just. But if they do not have a voice in the decision, even if the final decision is thought to be in their best interest, they will be more susceptible to feeling that an injustice has been done. This underlines the importance of making sure that all personnel associated with a mission have the chance to express their opinions to the decision makers, who must set apart time not only to listen but also to give feedback to interested parties in a way that allows

these parties to feel that they have been heard.

Procedures used to make decisions must be consistent across people and across time. If members of an organization feel that some people are treated with favoritism or that the rules for obtaining what one wants are shifting, they will harbor perceptions of procedural injustice. James 2:1–4 describes an obvious case of favoritism concerning the rich and the poor. In missions we are more likely to show favoritism to people who are more like us in terms of age, values, personality, culture, or interests. James 2:4 describes the motives behind such favoritism as evil.

Similarly, we expect policies and decisions to be applied consistently, day after day, month after month. If older missionaries see that policies that once cost them dearly (such as rules concerning length of home assignment) are now ignored by others with impunity, they are likely to see the discrepancy as unfair. This fact does not mean that policies should never change, but it does imply that much careful communication needs to accompany changes. Leaders implementing change need to take into consideration the voices and feelings of all concerned. Once decisions are made, the changes need to be communicated clearly (perhaps using multiple means to communicate them) so that they do not come as a surprise when someone finds out that the old policies are no longer being applied.

Decisions must be made using accurate information. If one missionary accuses another missionary of wrongdoing, any decision or action by a third party against the accused missionary will be considered unjust if the accused missionary believes that the information on which the judgment was based is inaccurate. Mission leaders (or

any third party involved in solving a problem) need to make sure that all parties believe the leaders have accurate and complete information. If accuser and accused have different beliefs about what is true, any intervening party needs to be sure that he or she fully understands both points of view. Moreover, it is essential that the missionaries themselves believe that the third party understands their points of view and has all relevant information in hand. This process is often time-consuming and emotionally draining, but God has called us to live in truth and love, regardless of the cost.

An incorrect or flawed decision must be correctable. A church-planting couple apparently angered someone in their mission's leadership. They received a letter saying they were to resign from the mission within a week. When they asked why, the mission leader said he would not explain, because they would not agree. When they asked if they could appeal the decision, he said no. The couple felt they had no choice but to resign. All attempts at reconciliation were rejected by the mission leadership. Not only did the mission lose a successful church-planting couple, but also relationships were damaged in a way that probably did not please the Lord. Part of the problem was that the mission did not have in place a policy that could correct potentially flawed decisions. Whenever decisions are imposed on a less powerful party by fiat with no possibility of appeal, such as bringing in a mediator, they are likely to be perceived as unjust.

Decisions must be unbiased. If a national employee feels that she or he is being underpaid compared to employees of other missions, a decision that the pay level is correct, if made by the hiring mission, may well be seen as biased. If it is in the hiring

mission's interest to pay less (which is most likely the case due to such things as chronic under support of missionaries), mission decision makers are quite likely to give greater weight to information that says that a lower wage is just and less weight to information that says that a higher wage is just. Undoubtedly the mission leaders will believe that they are acting free of bias, but that is not likely to be the perception of the employee who feels underpaid. A decision to maintain or change the employee's salary will be much better accepted if it is seen as coming from an unbiased third party, fully trusted—and this is essential—by both the mission and the employee.

Decisions must be made on the basis of prevailing ethical standards. In secular organizations the issue of prevailing standards can be slippery. In Christian organizations, by contrast, the Bible is the usual standard for questions of ethics, and decisions must be made in light of biblical principles of goodness and justice. Most of the time in a Christian organization, this result is exactly what both parties want. Occasionally, though, disputes become so emotionally entangled that one or both parties do not want to discuss the issues, even if the Bible has something to say about them. In one situation a field leader would not meet with a missionary for over a year to discuss problems because emotions were so high. The situation could have been improved quickly if the two had been able to calm down, discuss the issues, and understand what the other was perceiving. They could then have committed themselves to working through the issues using biblical principles.

When any of these six elements is missing, a mission will be perceived as lacking procedural justice. When the level of procedural justice is low, members of the organization tend to be highly unsatisfied

with both the organization and its leadership (Colquitt et al. 2001). Trust deteriorates, attrition goes up, and people tend to respond to stressful situations in destructive ways. Instead of exchanging information in order to solve problems, members tend to withdraw or even sabotage the organization, making coordination of efforts to accomplish the organization's mission difficult. We harbor the hope that Christians would not normally be mean-spirited, but we must acknowledge that the negative effects mentioned can also infect Christian organizations. If missionaries are serious about reaching the world for Christ, they must coordinate their efforts, at the very least within their own organizations. Such coordination cannot occur unless all members believe that the decisions being made are characterized by procedural justice.

Both distributive justice and procedural justice are necessary for an organization to be perceived as just. But other less obvious forms of justice must also be in place. Interpersonal justice and informational justice focus on the ways two parties interact, regardless of the decisions that are made.

Interpersonal Justice

Even when an organization's members feel adequately rewarded and are satisfied with the procedures used in making decisions, if they are treated poorly by others, especially by those in leadership, they will believe that they are being treated unfairly (Greenberg 1993). Interpersonal justice is the perception that leaders treat members with politeness, dignity, and respect. Leaders also need to show emotional support; that is, they must be sensitive to what others are feeling and they must recognize the legitimacy of those feelings. Any signs of intimidation, threat, condescension, or manipulation will be

interpreted as violations of interpersonal justice.

Some people, especially women, are more naturally gifted than others at demonstrating interpersonal justice. This is one of the most difficult areas of growth for leaders. If we have authority, we tend to believe that we are to use it. Respect, emotional support, and persuasion are costly in terms of time and effort, and we can easily conclude that they are just too costly if we are to work efficiently. But perhaps these types of interaction are what Jesus had in mind when he said, "Those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them. . . . Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant" (Mark 10:42–43 NIV). One characteristic of servant leadership is a strong regard for those being led, seeking their good and being sensitive to what they are feeling and experiencing. Intimidation, threats, and ultimatums do not seem to be appropriate tools for servant leaders.

Interpersonal justice can have a major impact on the members and the esprit de corps of an organization, especially when the organization runs into difficulty. Jerald Greenberg, a professor at Ohio State University, studied nurses who were suffering injustice: their salaries were cut but they were expected to carry out the same amount of work (Greenberg 2006). Both right before and soon after the pay cut, he measured the stress reaction (the amount of reported insomnia) to this injustice among several groups of nurses. The amount of reported insomnia increased significantly after the pay cut. He then provided training in interpersonal justice to about half the supervisors of the nurses. The training included information on how to treat subordinates with politeness, dignity, and respect, as well as how to demonstrate emotional support and avoid intimidation. The supervisors were also instructed to

approach any of their subordinates whom they thought might feel that they had been treated unjustly by their supervisor and to do what they could to make the relationship right. During the first two weeks after the training, the nurses whose supervisors were trained in interpersonal justice suffered significantly less insomnia than those whose supervisors had not received the training. The beneficial effect continued for at least another six months. This study is an excellent example of how higher levels of interpersonal justice can dramatically improve people's lives, even when other forms of justice are absent.

Besides reducing insomnia, increased interpersonal justice has been shown both to reduce negative emotional reactions to a perceived lack of distributive justice and to increase "organizational citizenship behaviors" (Colquitt et al. 2001; Folger and Cropanzano 1998). Organizational citizenship behaviors are voluntary behaviors which are not included in one's job description but which help the organization achieve its goals, such as voluntarily helping other members of the organization with their responsibilities, keeping up on company policies, working to do an especially good job on the tasks one is assigned, and tolerating inconveniences without complaining (Greenberg 2005). The perception of interpersonal justice also predicts a favorable attitude toward one's supervisor, something that is especially important in mission organizations since missionaries need to trust one another in order to function as a team.

Examples of problems of interpersonal justice in missionary contexts include missionaries' refusing to communicate with each other, destructive accusations made against one another, and missionaries' being unwilling to work out complex interpersonal relationship problems between themselves. Justifying these

behaviors with "spiritual" reasons, such as "I'm doing God's will and that other missionary is getting in my way," may be easy and tempting, but such behavior is not what God is calling us to, even if it gives us more time to work on what we believe to be our primary mission. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and the rest of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23) are far more in line with what a God-directed ministry would look like. Even from a secular perspective, the qualities, emotions, and values described as the fruit of the Spirit are far more beneficial to an organization than are those that characterize a lack of interpersonal justice.

Informational Justice

The final type of organizational justice, which is to some degree independent of the others, is informational justice. It consists of clear communication concerning the reasons behind decisions that have been made (Folger and Cropanzano 1998; Greenberg 1993). If inadequate information is provided, especially concerning decisions that have a negative outcome for some members of the organization, those giving (or withholding) information will be viewed as unfair.

To be considered fair, information concerning unfavorable decisions must first of all be perceived as *true*. If information that a decision maker provides appears to be false, there clearly will be perceptions of injustice. Second, the information must provide *sufficient justification* for the decision. If the decision is unfavorable to some, the reason why they are expected to suffer personally needs to be justified by the benefit that the change brings to the organization. For their decisions to be accepted as fair, leaders must allow their decisions to be questioned, and they must fully engage stakeholders who wish to

provide a different point of view or want more complete information. Third, the information communicated must be *reasonable*, that is, logically consistent, showing that the decision takes all the available information into consideration. Fourth, it must be *timely,* available to the organization's members when they want it. If information is not made available when the persons affected want it, leaders will appear to be trying to hide something. Finally, communication must be *specific*. Vague generalities will not satisfy those who want to understand exactly why a decision was made. Vague communication will, again, be interpreted as an attempt to hide information.

In missions, communication characterized by informational justice can be costly. Under any conditions such communication requires time and emotional energy. But in mission contexts, geographic distances often make face-to-face communication difficult. When "context rich media" such as face-to-face or video conferencing are not possible, the next best solution is extended telephone conversations, an option that with the advent of Internet technology, such as Skype, has become extremely inexpensive (Daft and Lengel 1986; Dunaetz forthcoming). Telephone and video conferences may lessen the time commitment required, but such conversations can still be draining emotionally. They are necessary, however, for maintaining and building trust within an organization. If at all possible, information that risks provoking negative emotions should not be communicated through "context poor media" such as e-mail or printed documents. Emotionally negative information requires circumstances in which a maximum amount of information can be shared, explained, interpreted, re-explained, reinterpreted, and understood by both parties simultaneously.

Practical Applications

With the four dimensions of organizational justice, their causes, and their effects firmly in view, what can missions do on a practical level to become organizations that are more just? Following are two ideas that can be applied within home offices, on the field among missionaries, and within national organizations associated with missions and missionaries.

Training in organizational justice. One of the most immediate and practical steps is to provide training for all members in positions of leadership. Leaders include home staff, regional supervisors, and missionaries who provide oversight on the field, whether of other missionaries or of nationals.

Training in organizational justice is typically spread over several weeks or months and consists of a number of sessions, perhaps four half-day sessions (Skarlicki and Latham 1996, 1997). The program could consist of teaching about the various dimensions of organizational justice, discussion among the participants concerning the relevance of organizational justice to their sphere of influence, case studies, role playing, and developing strategies for increasing the perception of justice within the organization. An important aspect of organizational justice training consists of assignments that the participants carry out between the sessions. They are required to talk with at least one subordinate or colleague who might have perceived something the participant had done as being unfair. This assignment gives them a real life opportunity to put into practice what they have learned by detecting, understanding, and correcting a perceived injustice. At the following session they share their experiences within a small group. Frequently stories of reconciliation and

restored relationships that are brought about while carrying out these assignments become a highlight of the training experience.

The establishing of a conflict management system. Even with missionaries well trained in organizational justice, conflicts will occur. Among passionate and strong willed missionaries, such conflicts often surpass their ability to resolve them on their own. Mission organizations need to have a conflict management system in place that all who wish to can access (Costantino and Merchant 1996). The system needs to include the availability of mediation for any who desire it (typically it is the person in the less powerful position who wants mediation, while the more powerful person resists it). The organization must ensure the availability of a mediator who is willing and able to invest large periods of time in understanding the conflict, building a trust relationship with the parties involved, and helping them to understand each other before any constructive solution can be found. For this reason, mission agencies should designate a person as mediator who is able to travel as needs arise, or they should provide funds to hire local mediators who can intervene where conflict occurs.

Conclusion

Organizational justice is not a subject about which most Christian leaders want to think. It is far easier to think that our pure motives, our wise decisions, and our love for individuals will be clearly seen and understood by those for whom we have responsibility and over whom we have influence. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. Occasionally we are not as pure, wise, or loving as we think we are. Even more often, our actions are misinterpreted by those who observe us. This means that

there are undoubtedly instances when those around us perceive our actions or decisions to be unjust.

We can be motivated to increase organizational justice simply because it will enable our organization to function better. But for the Christian, organizational justice is not just a means by which members can be motivated to work toward the organization's goals. Organizational justice is part of our responsibility to live in a Christ-pleasing and biblical manner, loving others as God has loved us.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the self-serving biases that we have as human beings that prevent us from correctly evaluating the fairness of our decisions?
2. How is organizational justice similar to the biblical concept of justice? How are they different? Why would we want to measure organizational justice?
3. What is the difference between the principles of equality and equity? When would one be more appropriate than the other?
4. What is procedural justice? How does it differ from other forms of justice? Why is it so important?
5. What is informational justice? Why is it so hard to achieve? For whom is this type of justice most important?
6. What can mission organizations do to make sure their missionaries feel that they are being treated fairly?

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