

## Research Article

### The Effect of Perceived Justice on Satisfaction, Value, Trust and Affect: Evidence from a Business-to-Business Context

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**Abstract:** This research investigates the effect of distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice on satisfaction, value, trust and affect. Furthermore, this study argues whether these variables influence behavioral intentions in a B2B setting. To test these relationships, the present study uses data from 198 members of purchasing committee in medical laboratory. Structural equations modeling using PLS was performed to empirically test the relationship between the constructions in this study. The results of the structural equation analysis reveal that all of these hypotheses are supported. Following a discussion of the results, research limitations and directions for future research are offered.

**Keywords:** Affect, behavioral intentions, customer justice perception, satisfaction value, trust

## INTRODUCTION

The concepts and principles of justice, as an evaluative judgment about the appropriateness of a person's treatment by others have stemmed from the attempt of social scientists (Adams, 1965; Blau, 1964). Recent research has examined the effects of customer justice perception on satisfaction with service recovery, affect, organization commitment, trust; purchase intention, consumption experience and word-of-mouth communication (Yi and Gong, 2008; Aurier and Siadou-Martin, 2007; Homburg and Fürst, 2005; Tax *et al.*, 1998; Blodgett *et al.*, 1997). More recently, academic and managerial interest in the conceptualization of justice principles (distributive, procedural and interactional justice) increased in the marketing literature (Smith *et al.*, 1999; Sparks and McColl-Kennedy, 1998; Tax *et al.*, 1998). Oliver and Swan (1989a) suggest that justice is an additional factor in explaining customers' satisfaction that is not captured in the expectancy disconfirmation paradigm of measuring service quality. In order to more fundamentally comprehend effective service recovery, researchers have utilized justice theory as the main framework for examining service recovery methods. A justice theory framework has gained popularity in explaining how consumers evaluate service providers' reactions to service failure/recovery (Nikbin *et al.*, 2010). Justice refers to an act considered "just" because someone perceives it as such (Cropanzano and Greenberg, 1997; Leventhal, 1980; Seiders and Berry,

1998). Likewise, fairness has been viewed as a fundamental base against which people judge the nature of relationships among people and between social institutions and individuals (Clemmer and Schneider, 1996). Bagozzi (1974) introduced the issue of fairness/equity to marketing through marketing exchange theory. Justice perception is a multifaceted construct, encompassing three dimensions: distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice (Yi and Gong, 2008; Homburg and Fürst, 2005). Distributive justice refers to the degree to which customers feel they have been treated fairly. Procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness of the policies and procedures by the organization. Interactional justice refers to the extent to which customers are treated fairly in their interactions with organization employees (Yi and Gong, 2008; Voorhees and Brady, 2005; Tax *et al.*, 1998).

Although the influential research by Oliver and Swan (1989a) facilitated the application of the justice framework to customer evaluations of products or services, little is known about the relative impact of the different justice dimensions beyond the well-established expectancy disconfirmation paradigm. Despite recent advances in marketing, there is still much to learn about influence of customer perceptions of justice on satisfaction, trust, affect and value and intention customer. Though some research has examined the effects of perceived justice in service recovery (McCollough *et al.*, 2000; Smith *et al.*, 1999; Tax *et al.*, 1998; Blodgett *et al.*, 1993), the relative

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effects of the dimensions of justice on satisfaction and other variables and in other contexts have not been well addressed. Thus research is needed that examines these relationships.

The main objective of this study is to identify the nature of justice components experienced by individuals in purchase experiences in business to business context and also to investigate interrelationships among perceived justice, affect, trust, satisfaction and behavioral intentions.

### **Conceptual framework and hypotheses:**

**Customer justice perception:** Recent researches have investigated the effects of customer justice perception on satisfaction with service recovery, affect, organization commitment, trust, purchase intention, consumption experience and word-of-mouth communication (Yi and Gong, 2008; Aurier and Siadou-Martin, 2007; Homburg and Fürst, 2005; Tax *et al.*, 1998; Blodgett *et al.*, 1997). Justice refers to an act considered “just” because someone perceives it as such (Seiders and Berry, 1998; Cropanzano and Greenberg, 1997; Leventhal, 1980). However, few studies have examined outcome variables in a service delivery setting. Customer justice perception is a multifaceted construct, encompassing three dimensions: distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice (Yi and Gong, 2008; Homburg and Fürst, 2005).

**Distributive justice:** distributive justice refers to the degree to which customers feel they have been treated fairly (Yi and Gong, 2008). Distributive justice focuses on the outcome of the exchange that includes such monetary rewards as refunds for failed service, discount, coupons and etc. Furthermore it has been mentioned that distributive justice relates to the compensation offered to dissatisfied customers to resolve their complaints (Mattila, 2001).

**Procedural justice:** Procedural justice refers to the perceived justice of the policies and methods by the organization. In fact Procedural justice refers to the methods that the firm uses to deal with the problems arising during service delivery in aspect such as accessibility, timing/speed, process control, delay and flexibility to a dapt to the customer needs (Rio-Lanza *et al.*, 2009).

**Interactional justice:** Interactional justice refers to the extent to which customers are treated fairly in their relationships with organization employees (Yi and Gong, 2008; Voorhees and Brady, 2005; Tax *et al.*, 1998).

Distributive justice involves three principles: cost, amount of service and excellence.

Procedural justice includes responding to unusual requests, efficient service, low waiting times and helpful service employees.

Interactional justice concerns the extent to which employees treat customers with friendliness, objectivity, honesty, politeness and genuine interest (Yi and Gong, 2008).

**Customer justice perception, customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions:** Customer satisfaction is a concept that has been widely discussed in the literature (Bigne *et al.*, 2005). Understanding what influences consumer satisfaction can help business owners and managers design and deliver appropriate offers that cater to market demand (Wu and Liang, 2009). It can be defined as the degree to which one believes that an experience create positive feelings (Rust and Oliver, 1994). Customer satisfaction in the B2B context is often defined as a positive affective state resulting from the appraisal of all aspects of a firm’s working relationship with another firm (Geyskens *et al.*, 1999). Paste studied indicated that justice have a positive effect on customer satisfaction.

Goodwin and Ross (1992) applied a theory of equity to explain how service recovery influences customer satisfaction. Their study indicated that customer response to service recovery is determined by two types of perceived justice: procedural justice and interactive justice. The Goodwin study presented the justice framework for customer service scenarios in four different service businesses.

- **Distributive justice:** The tangible compensation received by a customer after a complaint
- **Procedural justice:** The opportunity for the customer to present information and express feelings
- **Interactive justice:** The apology to the customer

Other studies found that, when tangible compensation is offered, an apology and an opportunity for the consumer to express the problem and his/her feelings increase the perception of justice and customer satisfaction. When no tangible compensation is offered, an apology and the opportunity for the customer to present information and express his/her feelings have a reduced effect on perception of justice and satisfaction (Chang *et al.*, 2007). Also, the positive relationship between perceptions of distributive justice and consumer satisfaction is well established, specifically in the handling of complaints (Aurier and Martin, 2007).

Oliver (1997) referred to behavioral intentions as the stated likelihood to engage in a specific behavior. Zeithaml *et al.* (1996) grouped behavioral intentions into favorable behavioral intentions (positive word of mouth, recommending, remaining loyal, spend more and paying a price premium) and unfavorable behavioral intentions (negative word of mouth, switching to another company, complaining to external agencies, less business with company). Research findings indicate that satisfaction is highly correlated with behavioral responses such as complaining

behavior, negative/positive word of mouth and repurchase intentions (Bigne *et al.*, 2008; Ladhari, 2007; Athanassopoulos *et al.*, 2001; Szymanski and Henard, 2001).

We test the relationship between Customer justice perception, satisfaction and behavioral intentions in our research to ascertain whether the relationships identified in previous studies can be supported in an industrial setting. Based on these arguments, we test the following hypotheses:

- H1:** Distributive justice is positively related to customer satisfaction.
- H2:** Procedural justice is positively related to customer satisfaction.
- H3:** Interactional justice is positively related to customer satisfaction.
- H4:** Customer satisfaction is positively related to behavioral intentions.

**Customer justice perception, perceived value and behavioral intentions:** The role of value is becoming an increasing concern to customers and marketers because it is one of the most important forces in today's marketplace (Ryu *et al.*, 2008). Zeithaml (1988) defines value as the consumer overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perception of what's received and what is given. More specific, perceived value can be summarized as a trade-off between perceived benefits and perceived costs (Lovelock, 2000). As discussed in Oliver and Swan (1989a), distributive justice implies a comparison between costs and benefits. In other words, customers focus on whether they get what they deserved. Time spent and price paid are compared to the received outcome. The perception of distributive justice may contribute to perceived value. Moreover, some local issues also appear to be particularly relevant in the service evaluation, such as the time needed for delivery of the service and the convenience of the overall process (Taylor, 1994; Gilly and Gelb, 1982). Past studies have suggested that perceived value is direct antecedents of behavioral intentions (Petrick and Backman, 2002; Cronin *et al.*, 2000; Tam, 2000; McDougall and Levesque, 2000; Dodds *et al.*, 1991). The current research attempts to investigation of relationship between of Customer justice perception, perceived value and behavioral intentions as part of our research model. This leads to our next hypotheses:

- H5:** Distributive justice is positively related to customer perceived value.
- H6:** Procedural justice is positively related to customer perceived value.
- H7:** Interactional justice is positively related to customer perceived value.
- H8:** Customer perceived value is positively related to behavioral intentions.

**Customer justice perception, trust and behavioral intentions:** The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2010) defines trust as "assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something." Despite this seemingly simple nature of the definition, trust is perhaps one of the most highly challenging terms whose concepts are hardly agreed upon by researchers within diverse academic disciplines (Hong and Cho, 2011). Fukuyama (1995) defines trust as "the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest and cooperative behavior, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of members of that community". A number of authors suggest that the construct of trust is an important element of long term buyer-seller relationships in a business environment (Wirtz and Mattila, 2004). Aurier and Siadou-Martin (2007) and Royter and Wetzels (1999) investigate the direct relationship between the dimensions of justice and trust. These researchers found a significant relationship between of justice and trust. The effect of trust on behavioral intentions has been mentioned by a number of researchers. Trust is essential in building strong consumer-brand relationships (Urban *et al.*, 2000; Fournier, 1998) and it is positively related to brand loyalty (Taylor *et al.*, 2004; Lau and Lee, 1999). Trust reflects cumulative effects over time on loyalty in high-involvement; high-service product markets (Chiou and Droge, 2006). Also, Gounaris (2005) showed that Trust have a positive relationship with behavioral intentions. This forms the basis for our next hypotheses:

- H9:** Distributive justice is positively related to trust.
- H10:** Procedural justice is positively related to trust.
- H11:** Interactional justice is positively related to trust.
- H12:** Trust is positively related to behavioral intentions.

**Customer justice perception, affect and behavioral intentions:** Affect is defined as feeling states that are subjectively perceived by consumers during consumption or service encounters (Gardner, 1985). Affect represents a construct that is known to act in general marketing models such as studied herein and represents "an umbrella for a set of more specific mental processes including emotions, moods and (possibly) attitudes" (Bagozzi *et al.*, 1999). Kim *et al.* (1998) present results suggesting that affect can effect on consumer attitudes even in the absence of product beliefs. Affect is known to influence information processing, mediate responses to persuasive appeals, measure the effects of marketing stimuli, enact goal-directing behaviors and serve as ends and measures of consumer welfare. However, these authors further assert that an area neglected by marketers is the role of affect in marketing exchanges and relationships (Taylor *et al.*, 2004). The two dimensions of affect are positive affect and negative affect (Watson *et al.*, 1988). Positive affect denotes pleasurable engagement, whereas negative affect is associated with such feelings as anger, contempt, disgust, guilt and nervousness

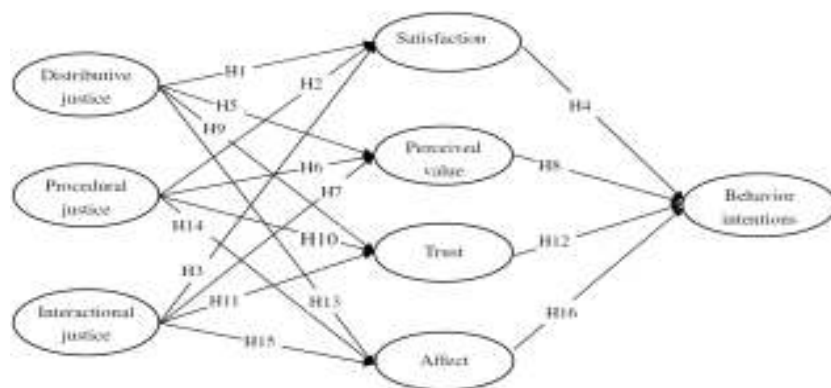


Fig. 1: Research conceptual model

(Watson *et al.*, 1988). Positive affect and negative affect are not merely opposite poles of the same affective dimension, but two independent and distinct dimensions (Huang, 2001; Bagozzi *et al.*, 1999; Watson *et al.*, 1988). Several researchers investigated the impact of justice on affect. A recent justice study also applied a discrete emotions approach, suggesting that perceived price unfairness is associated with feelings of disappointment or anger (Xia *et al.*, 2004). Similarly, in social justice research, the effects of procedural justice on discrete emotional responses were investigated using happiness-related emotions (happiness, joy and pride) and sadness-related emotions (disappointment, anger and frustration) (Namkung and Jang, 2010; Krehbiel and Cropanzano, 2000). Also, several researchers have also investigated the impact of affect on customer satisfaction, loyalty, complaint behavior, information processing, reactions to advertising and decision making (Bigne *et al.*, 2008; Ladhari, 2007; Huang, 2001; Bagozzi *et al.*, 1999; Knowles *et al.*, 1993). These researchers found a significant relationship between of affect and behavioral intentions. Based on these arguments, we test the following hypotheses:

- H13:** Distributive justice is positively related to affect.
- H14:** Procedural justice is positively related to affect.
- H15:** Interactional justice is positively related to affect.
- H16:** Affect is positively related to behavioral intentions.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Research model:** Based on the preceding literature, the research model for this study, shown in Fig. 1 which investigates of the effect of dimensions of justice on satisfaction, value, trust, affect and behavioral intentions

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Measurement items:** Self-administered questionnaires were used for the entire survey. All the scale items were adopted from the relevant literature. However, we

modified the wording of specific items to reflect the focus of this Study. The constructs were measured by means of 5-point Likert scales. Distributive justice was assessed with three items from Blodgett *et al.* (1997) and Yi and Gong (2008). These items measured the degree of perceived justice with respect to the outcome of the interaction with company. Procedural justice was measured with three items adapted from Maxham III and Netemeyer (2002), Voorhees and Brady (2005) and Yi and Gong (2008). These items measured the degree of perceived justice concerning the policy and procedures of the firm. Interactional justice was measured using three items from Chory-Assad and Paulsel (2004) and Yi and Gong (2008). These items measured the degree of respect of seller- buyer communication and how well the seller understands buyer needs and wants. Value was measured using the three-item five-point Likert scale (Lasser *et al.*, 1995; Taylor *et al.*, 2004). Trust was measured using two items 5-point likert. Trust was operationalized by adapting Doney and Cannon (1997) measure and Caceres and Paparoidamis (2007). Satisfaction was measured using four items five-point likert (Ladhari, 2007; Oliver, 1997). Affect was measured using the three-item five-point Likert scale (Chaudhuri and Hollbrook, 2001). Behavioral intention was measured using the four item five-point Likert scale (Sheng *et al.*, 2011).

**Sample population and data collection procedure:** In this research, business-to-business context was selected to empirically test the conceptual model and the hypothesized relationships. The research population in this study consisted of members of purchase committees in Alborz city that have recently purchased material from Pars Azmoon brand. Stratified random sampling was used; however, the method of selecting respondents was systematic random sampling. The source for our sampling frame involved medical library list from Alborz medical university for recently purchased. According to the information received, the total number of purchasing committee's members is 359 persons. Therefore, population size was

359 and the sample size was determined according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table to be at least 190. Data collected from 225 member's of purchasing committee. A total of 198 usable questionnaires were retained.

**ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

**Demographic characteristics:** The demographic characteristics of the sample were shown in Table 1.

**Data analysis procedures:** Partial Least Squares (PLS) was employed to estimate the models. PLS is a second generation Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique developed by Wold (1982)? It works well with structural equation models that contain latent

Table 1: Demographic characteristics

Demographic variables	n	%
Gender	98	49.5
Male	100	50.5
Female	198	100.0
Total		
Age (year)		
Below 30	23	11.6
30-40	91	45.9
40-50	58	29.3
Above 50	26	13.2
Total	198	100.0
Educational level		
Associated of science	50	25.3
Bachelor of science	96	48.5
Master of science	32	16.1
PhD	20	10.1
Total	198	100.0

variables and a series of cause-and-effect relationships (Gustafsson and Johnson, 2004).

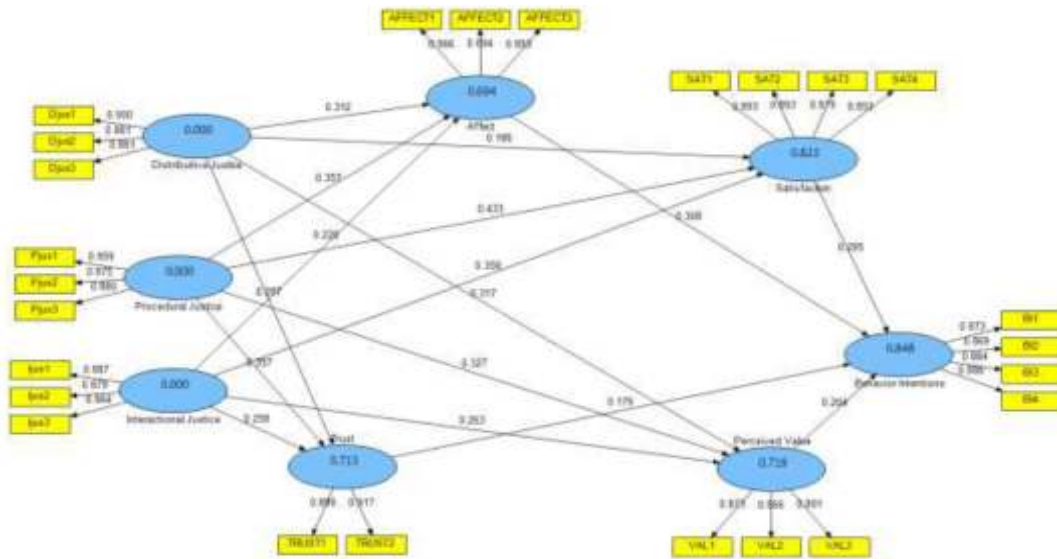


Fig. 2: Research model in estimation situation

Table 2: Average variance extraction, composite reliability, R square and Cronbach's alpha of the constructs

	AVE	Composite reliability	R <sup>2</sup>	Cronbachs α
Affect	0.806	0.926	0.694	0.879
Behavior intentions	0.772	0.931	0.848	0.901
Distributive justice	0.788	0.918		0.865
Interactional justice	0.769	0.909		0.850
Perceived value	0.769	0.909	0.719	0.850
Procedural justice	0.759	0.904		0.841
Satisfaction	0.774	0.932	0.823	0.902
Trust	0.825	0.904	0.713	0.788

Table 3: Latent variable correlations

	Affect	Behavior intentions	Distributive justice	Interactional justice	Perceived value	Procedural justice	Satisfaction	Trust
Affect	1.000							
Behavior intentions	0.869	1.000						
Distributive justice	0.788	0.821	1.000					
Interactional justice	0.757	0.836	0.820	1.000				
Perceived value	0.833	0.852	0.802	0.769	1.000			
Procedural justice	0.788	0.806	0.828	0.787	0.769	1.000		
Satisfaction	0.833	0.870	0.831	0.843	0.834	0.863	1.000	
Trust	0.814	0.840	0.795	0.775	0.813	0.798	0.830	1.000

Table 4: Path coefficients and t-value

	Total effect	t statistic
Affect-> behavior intentions	0.308	5.391
Distributive justice-> affect	0.312	3.533
Distributive justice-> behavior intentions	0.267	4.368
Distributive justice-> perceived value	0.317	4.213
Distributive justice-> satisfaction	0.186	3.054
Distributive justice-> trust	0.287	3.490
Interactional justice-> affect	0.220	2.744
Interactional justice-> behavior intentions	0.271	5.558
Interactional justice-> perceived value	0.263	3.834
Interactional justice-> satisfaction	0.350	6.909
Interactional justice-> trust	0.258	3.787
Perceived value -> behavior intentions	0.204	3.038
Procedural justice-> affect	0.357	4.531
Procedural justice-> behavior intentions	0.368	6.624
Procedural justice-> perceived value	0.327	4.393
Procedural justice-> satisfaction	0.433	7.701
Procedural justice-> trust	0.357	4.670
Satisfaction -> behavior intentions	0.295	5.136
Trust -> behavior intentions	0.179	3.382

In this Study We selected PLS because this technique can accommodate small samples and it provides measurement assessment. Recently, the PLS path modeling technique has been widely used in marketing literature (Aspara and Tikkanen, 2011; Ngo and O’Cass, 2009; Guenzi *et al.*, 2008; Wittmann *et al.*, 2009). According to Barclay *et al.* (1995), a PLS path model must be analyzed and interpreted in two stages:

- The assessment of the reliability and validity of the measurement model
- The assessment of the structural model

The AVE coefficients assess the amount of variance that the construct captures from its indicators relative to the amount due to measurement error. Discriminant validity indicates the extent to which a

given construct is different from other latent variables (Sánchez and Roldán, 2005). To assess discriminant validity, AVE should be greater than the variance shared between the latent construct and other latent constructs in the model (i.e. the squared correlation between two constructs). All latent variables satisfy this condition. For this reason, we maintain the discriminant validity of the latent constructs of the models. All the measurement model results are acceptable and suggest that it is appropriate to proceed with the assessment of the structural model. Reliability test was used to assess the consistency of the result measurements. The coefficient alpha is the most popular measure of reliability for a multi-item scale. Also, we used Composite Reliability to assessing of reliability test. In our study, all the measurement scales demonstrate adequate internal consistency. Values were all above 0.70 as suggested by Nunnally (1978) and therefore indicated internal consistent (Table 2 and 3).

In our study, all hypothesized relationships are statistically significant. Table 4 present the estimates and t values for path coefficients for the base and revised models. Also, Fig. 2 and 3 present Research Model in Estimation situation and Research Model in T-Value Situation.

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study developed and empirically tested a conceptual framework that addresses the nature of justice components experienced by individuals in purchase experiences and also to investigate interrelationships among perceived justice, affect, trust,

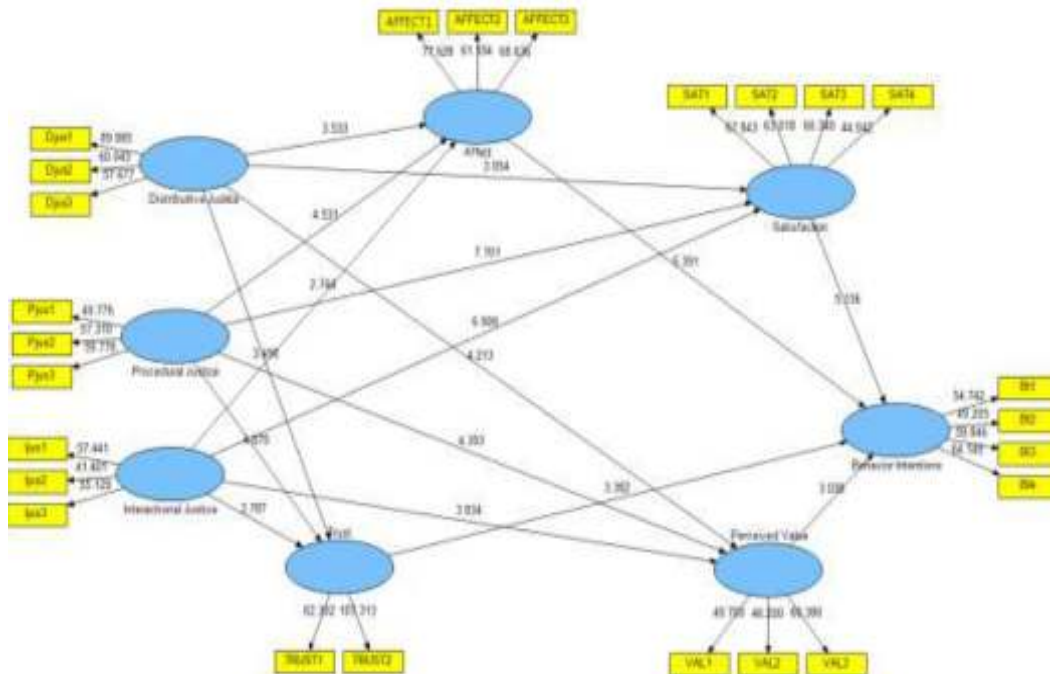


Fig. 3: Research model in T-value situation

value, satisfaction and behavioral intentions in a B2B setting. Although most previous research focused on the service failure context, this research attempted to understand the impact of customer justice perception on satisfaction, trust, affect, value and intent within the B2B setting. Because the importance of satisfaction, value and affect is well established through numerous prior studies, managers clearly need to understand the importance of managing justice perception among customers. Customer justice perception is a multifaceted construct, encompassing three dimensions: distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice (Yi and Gong, 2008; Homburg and Fürst, 2005).

In this current study, all of the hypotheses were supported and support previous studies findings. As hypothesized, dimensions of justice have significant direct positive relationship with satisfaction. This result supports the findings of Liao (2007), Maxham III and Netemeyer (2002), Szymanski and Henard (2001), Tax *et al.* (1998) and Blodgett *et al.* (1997). But, this result doesn't support the finding of Aurier and Siadou-Martin (2007). Similar to the finding of the Zabkar *et al.* (2010), Ladhari (2007) and Bigne *et al.* (2005), satisfaction has a significant direct positive relationship with behavioral intention. The relationships between of justice components with perceived value were positive and significant. This result supports the findings of Aurier and Siadou-Martin (2007). Also, the relationship value with behavioral intention was significant. This result supports the findings of Chen and Chen (2010), Chen (2008) and Choi *et al.* (2004). Similar to the finding of the Nikbin *et al.* (2010) and Aurier and Siadou-Martin (2007) as hypothesized; the components of perceived justice demonstrate have significant direct positive relationship with trust. Trust is strongly linked to behavioral intention in this study. Also, in our study, as expected, the components of perceived justice demonstrate impacts on the affect. This result supports the findings of Namkung and Jang (2010), Yi and Gong (2008) and Chebat and Slusarczyk (2005). Similar to the finding of the Namkung and Jang (2010) and Bigne *et al.* (2005), affect has a significant direct positive relationship with behavioral intentions. These results showed that Managers need to emphasize on customer justice perception to improve satisfaction, trust, affect and value. The results of this study revealed that managers need to train employees to serve their customer better, so that customers perceive greater justice. Also, managers should re-examine the justice of existing processes. This is especially important because the results indicate that customer justice perception may influence satisfaction, value, trust and affect.

Although this study provides useful insights, there are several limitations worth addressing. This research only focused on business to business setting and in a specific country the findings cannot be generalized to other setting and different geographical areas.

Additional research using other types of industrials and settings would increase the generalizability of our findings. Second, the data collection for this study relied exclusively on survey information gathered at one point in time. This approach raises concerns regarding the influence of common method variance. Future work should consider a longitudinal design to delineate more clearly the causal relations hypothesized in our framework.

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