JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT IN THE CLASSROOM:THE SOCIAL EXCHANGE PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the relationship between students' perceptions of justice and empowerment in the Ghanaian classroom. Three hundred and sixty five senior secondary and technical school students purposively and conveniently sampled, completed questionnaires on classroom justice scales comprising; distributive, interactional and procedural justice scales. Correlation analyses indicated a significant positive relationship between classroom justice and student empowerment. Regression analyses revealed procedural justice perceptions as the only predictor of student empowerment . Results are discussed within the framework of the social exchange theory.

Keywords

Classroom justice, empowerment, distributive justice, interactional justice, procedural justice

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Classrooms are places where understanding and application of knowledge in our lives are expected to be achieved, and have lots of influence on students in achieving these goals (Fraser cited in Otami, Ampiah & Anthony-Krueger, 2012). According to Frymier, Shulman and Houser (1996), "The challenge for contemporary teachers is to figure out how to manage the classroom environment so that students feel intrinsically motivated to learn and perform high quality work" (p.181).

Teachers are usually seen as having authority to manage the class. They are equally expected to influence through performance of duties as a result of the capabilities vested in them. However, good academic performance does not solely depend on teachers. Factors such as availability of infrastructure, teaching and learning materials, good parental care, conducive academic environment, physiological and emotional support for students, positive peer influence, teachers' personal characteristics and the academic preparation of teachers among several others play a significant role in academic performance. As such, the issues of poor performance of students need a holistic tackle as quality teaching and learning is a collective effort among various stakeholders like government, parents, teachers and students.

The student-teacher relationship is an interpersonal one and the essential features of the interpersonal student-teacher relationship have been found to be important predictors of fairness (Frymier & Houser, 2000; Paulsel & Chory-Assad, 2004c; Schrodt, Turman & Soliz, 2006). Researchers have suggested that the student-teacher relationship is important for academic success, whilst classroom environment affects learning outcomes (Chory-Assad, 2002; Chory & McCroskey, 1999; Horan & Myers, 2009). Also, it has been found that both teachers and students are concerned about classroom justice (Horan, Chory & Goodboy, 2010; Horan & Myers, 2009).

This suffices to say that individual experiences of justice perceptions seem to be a key feature of students' experiences at school. But to date, the attention of most classroom justice research has been geared towards student antisocial or potentially negative responses or what elicits justice perceptions. For instance, research on classroom justice perceptions have shown that students' perceptions of procedural injustice is related with the likelihood of students to indirectly aggress against and show hostility toward their teacher (Chory-Assad, 2002; Chory-Assad & Paulsel, 2004b). Also, a relationship has been found between procedural justice and the use of deception and revenge as resistance strategies towards teachers' requests (Chory-Assad & Paulsel, 2004b). Additionally, students' likelihood of showing indirect aggression towards their teachers has been linked to interactional injustice (Chory-Assad & Paulsel, 2004a).

Inferring from classroom justice researches that have been conducted, a critical examination of the student-teacher relationship and perceptions of the classroom environment from the students' perspective in the Ghanaian context is important to understand the effect of justice perceptions on empowerment. Consequently, in this study students' perception of justice is examined with how it affects learning outcomes. The present study draws from both organizational justice and instructional communication literature in exploring justice related perceptions and learning outcomes in the classroom. Specifically, the study analyzes the relationship between students' perceptions of distributive, procedural and interactional justice and empowerment using the social exchange framework. This research adds to the limited literature on the positive outcomes of classroom justice perceptions by examining students' perceptions of the student-teacher relationship and learning environment in terms of justice and its effect on perceptions of empowerment in the Ghanaian classroom.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Classroom justice

Building on the organizational justice theory, Chory-Assad and Paulsel (2004b) define classroom justice as "perceptions of fairness regarding outcomes or processes that occur in the instructional context" (p. 254). Classroom justice research provides support for the validity of organizational-based theorizing and related measures in the instructional context (Horan, Chory & Goodboy, 2010). Chory-Assad (2002) argued for the validity of applying organizational justice research and theorizing to the instructional context by stating that organizational constructs such as culture (Chen, 2000) and continuous quality improvement (Frymier, Shulman & Houser, 1996) had been successfully applied to the classroom. Horan et al. (2010) further explain that even as Konovsky and Cropanzano, (1991) found a positive relationship between organizational procedural justice and job satisfaction, Chory and McCroskey (1999) also established a positive relationship between classroom procedural justice and affective learning which has been found to be the instructional equivalent of job satisfaction. Again, just as negative relationships have been found between justice and other criterion variables like employee resistance (Cohen – Charash & Spector, 2001), deception (Grover, 1997), revenge (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997), and hostility (Greenberg, 1987) in organizational research, a similar relationship is shown in classroom justice research in the form of a negative relationship between classroom justice and student resistance, deception, revenge and hostility (Chory- Assad & Paulsel, 2004b; Colquitt, 2001; Paulsel & Chory – Assad, 2005). There are three types of classroom justice namely; distributive, procedural, and interactional.

Distributive justice

Distributive justice has to do with fairness of the distribution of the conditions and goods that affect individual, group, or community well-being, including psychological, physiological, economic, and social aspects (Deutsch, 1985). In the instructional context, issues of who gets the teacher's attention and allocation of outcomes (grades) falls within the domain of distributive justice (Deutsch, 1985). In assessing distributive justice, individuals evaluate and compare the outcome (e.g. exam grade) they received to a standard or rule and/or to the outcome received by a referent (Adams, 1965; Cropanzano

& Greenberg, 1997). The referent could be one's past experience, expectations, effort expended, the outcome individuals felt they deserved, imagined outcomes, and the outcomes individuals might receive in the future. A student assessing the fairness of a grade for example, may compare that to the grade he or she expected to receive or to the grades others received.

Procedural justice

An individual's fairness judgement concerning the process components of the social system that regulates the distribution of resources involves procedural justice (Hubbel & Chory-Assad 2005). With procedural justice, the focus is on the individual's evaluation of events that precede the distribution (Leventhal, 1980). When evaluating the fairness of how decisions are made, individuals are making judgments of procedural justice. Teachers employ different standards, tools, and/or rules to evaluate a student's performance in determining the kind of outcomes or rewards to allocate students. They may consider attendance, classroom behavior, written assignments, and previous exam grades in assigning grades. All of these factors concern the procedures used in making decisions about grade allocation. Leventhal (1980) proposed six procedures on which procedural justice judgements are based. They are; consistency of application, prevailing ethical standards, the degree of bias, accuracy, correctability, and the extent to which all people concerned are considered. Kravitz, Stone-Romero and Ryer (1997) illustrated these justice rules in the instructional context in a situation in which a student believes he or she has received an unfairly low grade and choose to appeal the grade. Using this justice judgment model, the school's grade appeal procedure should: (a) treat all students the same (consistency rule); (b) eliminate the effects of student self-interest and instructor bias (bias suppression rule); (c) ensure that the student's final grade is based on accurate information about the instructor's standards and the student's performance (accuracy rule); (d) make it possible to change an initially inappropriate grade (correctability rule); (e) take into consideration the views of the instructor, the student, and other concerned parties (representativeness rule); and (f) be consistent with basic ethical principles (ethicality rule).

Interactional justice

Interactional justice refers to the fairness and quality of interpersonal treatment received when procedures are implemented (Bies & Moag, 1986). It involves evaluations regarding whether the teacher allows students' opinions, listens to students' concerns, and communicates in a non-condescending manner with students (Chory-Assad & Paulsel, 2004a). Interactional justice has been mentioned as having received the least attention in both instructional communication and organizational research (Colquitt, 2001; Paulsel & Chory-Assad, 2004). Tyler and Blader (2000) state that interactional justice is not only limited to the quality of treatment when formal procedures are performed, but also has to deal with the quality of treatment experienced from those in authority like teachers and during informal interactions within the group. Students' perceptions of fair interpersonal treatment from teachers reduce their likelihood to aggress indirectly (e.g. withholding information, spreading rumours) towards the instructor (Chory-Assad & Paulsel, 2004a).

A study by Lizzio, Wilson and Hadaway (2007) investigated the way in which students construe 'fairness' at the level of psychological identification with their academic unit. They found that students construed the fairness of their learning environment in terms of their learning partnership with staff and the procedural capacity of the wider system. A similar study by Horan, Chory and Goodboy (2010) investigated students' perceptions of fairness among undergraduate students from two public universities in the United States. Participants were provided written narratives to open ended questions to identify their experiences with classroom justice or injustice. Results indicated that students reported their instructors as engaging in unfair behaviours that represented the three components of classroom justice that earlier researches had identified as; distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (Chory, 2007; Chory-Assad & Paulsel, 2004b; Paulsel & Chory-Assad, 2005). Distributive justice issues identified included grades, opportunities to improve grades and punishments. Procedures involved in grading, exam schedules, feedback, missed work make-up rules, not enforcing class procedures and policies were some of the procedural justice issues identified. Interactional justice issues included passing prejudiced comments, singling out students, implying stupidity, and being impolite. Students reported procedural injustice almost three times more than distributive and interactional justice. The qualitative nature of the study and its findings corroborates the scales used in classroom justice and makes generalizations more valid considering also that the sample was drawn from two different universities.

In a study to find out how teachers view justice in the classroom, Horan and Myers (2009) found that teachers were more concerned with interactional justice, followed by procedural justice, and distributive justice. This corroborates Paulsel and Chory-Assad's (2005) study which suggested that instructors use interactional justice as a possible means to reduce student resistance. Thus, one can fairly deduce that instructors are mostly concerned about communicating fairly with students and least concerned with the distribution of outcomes.

As earlier indicated, studies on the impact of classroom justice have mostly concentrated on negative impacts. The most commonly mentioned resistance strategies include assigning blame to the teacher, modeling the teacher's lack of affect for the course, and reporting to a higher authority (Paulsel & Chory-Assad, 2004c). These retaliatory behaviors have been well delved into in most classroom justice research. For instance, Chory-Assad and Paulsel (2004b) found that students were more likely to engage in hostility when they perceived less procedural justice and were also likely to seek revenge or being deceptive to teachers. Further, Chory-Assad and Paulsel (2004a) found that students perceived less interactional justice when teachers used antisocial behavior alteration techniques of punishing students and making them feel guilty. Also, similar to previous studies, Chory-Assad and Paulsel's (2004a) study showed that students were more likely to use indirect interpersonal aggression against their teachers when they perceived less interactional justice. It is very obvious from these researches that negative consequences for the perceptions of less procedural, distributive, and interactional justice result in various forms of antisocial responses from students.

Student Empowerment

According to Frymier, Shulman and Houser (1996), an empowered learner is one who is motivated to perform tasks, finds tasks meaningful, feels competent to perform them, and feels his/her efforts have an impact on how things are done. Empowerment consists of three dimensions important to students; meaningfulness, competence, and impact. *Meaningfulness* refers to the perceived value of a task (like learning) in relation to one's own ideals. That is, how important students perceive a task according to their personal beliefs and standards. It is believed that students usually work harder to complete tasks that they value much. *Competence* refers to whether or not an individual feels qualified and capable to perform the necessary activities to achieve a goal (course objectives). *Impact* means that the accomplishment of a task (learning contents of a subject) is perceived to make a difference in the scheme of things.

Empowerment, as literature suggests is a motivation – based construct. However, Schrodt, Witt, Myers, Turman, Barton and Jernberg (2008) distinguish between empowerment and other motivation based constructs by emphasizing that the added dimensions of control and competence distinguish empowerment from other motivation-based constructs. This is because empowerment includes a cognitive belief state of personal involvement and competence or self efficacy that leads to a sense of personal effectiveness. Schrodt et al., (2008) also found that student feelings of empowerment and their assessments of college instruction vary to different degrees as functions of different types of teacher power. Their results extend the understanding of teacher communication behaviours that enhance student empowerment and lead to higher teaching evaluations.

Classroom Justice and Student Empowerment

Chory-Assad (2002) found that classroom justice was positively related to student motivation and affective learning (internalization of beliefs and values towards learning) but negatively related to student aggression towards an instructor. The study examined the relationship between students' perceptions of distributive and procedural justice in a college course and student motivation concerning the course, affective learning, and aggression toward the course instructor.

The non inclusion of interactional justice might have influenced this outcome but Chory-Assad (2002) noted that the way distributive justice was measured could have contributed to its inability to reach significant predictive power. She further explained that the scale assessed fairness of grade relative to only other students and that if comparisons had been made with other referents like past experiences and students' own expectations, it would have resulted in a different relationship between distributive justice and student outcomes.

Paulsel (2005) hypothesized in a study that perceptions of classroom justice predicts perceptions of student empowerment. Results indicated that classroom justice perceptions predicted student empowerment. This supports Chory-Assad's (2002) positive relationship between classroom justice and motivation. It further depicts the positive influence classroom justice perceptions could have on learning outcomes. However, Paulsel's study did not examine further which classroom justice component was the strongest predictor of student empowerment. Again, Chory-Assad and Paulsel's (2004a) interactional justice scale which was used in the study has been criticized in other subsequent classroom justice research that it assessed perceptions that have been related to interactional justice rather than measuring the construct directly. Consequently, the revised interactional justice scale by Chory (2007) is used in this study.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To examine the relationship between perceptions of classroom justice and student empowerment.
- To find out whether the three forms of classroom justice (distributive, interactional, procedural) significantly predict student empowerment.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory posits that individuals enter into relationships with others to maximize their benefits (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961). The fundamental idea of social exchange theory (SET) is that human behavior is an exchange of rewards between people. Blau (1964) maintains that there are two types of exchanges; economic and social. According to him, economic exchange relationships are short term quid pro quo arrangements where concrete and pecuniary resources are exchanged. Social exchanges on the other hand are long term relationships and involve socio-emotional responses like respect and recognition that are less tangible. Rewards like personal attraction and social approval are social exchanges that are intrinsic to the relationship between people (Blau, 1964).Foa and Foa (1976, 1974) expanded the notion of exchange to include a cognitive approach to the study of all interpersonal experiences. According to Foa and Foa (1976), the nature of an exchange can be understood by examining the resources exchanged. In their view, interactions involve giving or taking away resources and individuals try to maximize resources within a certain range.

As popularized, Social exchange theory (SET) has to do with interactions and direct contact with individuals and is equally potent for the study of student-teacher interactions but the implications of social exchange theory are very limited in the instructional context. The tenets of SET are helpful guides to ensuring successful student-teacher relationships. The teacher provides resources within the categories of information, status and service whiles students provide time, access to information, learning materials, opportunities to observe student-teacher interaction among others. According to Lawler (2001), emotions constitute a powerful motivating force in sustaining exchange relationships because 'feeling good' from

interactions is valued by all participants. In the context of SET in the classroom, students are expected to alter their behavior to conform to advice of teachers when the advice is assumed to be competent and beneficial. Economic exchanges like grades can be explained by examining how tangible grades are. Distributive justice which falls in this domain is well explained by this economic exchange since students expect tangible outcomes as rewards in the form of grades. Juxtaposed to the social aspect which is more interpersonal, procedural and interactional justice falls in this domain as this interaction involves less tangible resources like respect, recognition and esteem (Blau, 1964).

Social exchange theory is potentially useful in linking variations in student-teacher interactions and student outcomes (empowerment). It is important to state that negative student-teacher interactions and difficult exchanges potentially constrain positive outcomes.

Statement of Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are proposed based on the above reviewed literature.

1) There will be a significant positive relationship between classroom justice and student empowerment (Paulsel, 2005).

2) The three forms of classroom justice (distributive, interactional, procedural) will be significant predictors of student empowerment (Chory 2002; Lizzio et al., 2007).

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional correlational design because the study intended to establish relationships between variables from a representative sample at one time. This design is useful for gathering data from a large population in a relatively short time.

Population

All senior high school students in the Tema municipality, whose population is estimated at 6800, constituted the population of interest for the study. The Tema municipality is located near the nation's capital, Accra and is populated by people of diverse ethnic, socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. This reflects to a higher extent, the population composition of all senior high students in Ghana and hence appropriate for the study.

Sampling technique and Sample size

The non-probabilistic techniques of purposive and convenience sampling were employed to get the schools and participants for the study. A total of 365 students were sampled from the population of SSS students; 165 from a technical school and 200 from a senior high school

Instruments/Measures

A total of four measuring scales were used for this study. They are; distributive justice scale, interactional justice scale, procedural justice scale, learner empowerment scale. Below is a description of the various sections and its correspondent measured variable.

Distributive justice

Chory-Assad and Paulsel's (2004b) distributive justice scale was used to assess classroom distributive justice. This scale consists of 12 items on which respondents report their perceptions of fairness about the grades they received or expect to receive in the given subject and has Cronbach's alpha ranging between 0.84 and 0.92. Example of items include: Your grade on the last exam compared to "other students' grades on the exam", and "the grade you expected to receive on the exam". Responses are made on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from *extremely unfair (1)* to *extremely fair(5).* Total scores range from 5 to 60 with higher scores representing perceptions of more distributive justice and lower scores representing lesser perceptions of distributive justice.

Procedural justice scale

Perceptions of classroom procedural justice were assessed by Chory-Assad and Paulsel's (2004b) procedural justice scale, which contains 15 items on which participants assess the fairness of the instructor's policies, grading processes, and scheduling. This scale's Cronbach's alpha range is between 0.90 and 0.94. Example of items include: "the class attendance rules" and "the scheduling of exams". Responses are made on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from *extremely unfair (1)* to *extremely fair(5).* Total scores range from 5 to 75 with higher scores representing perceptions of more procedural justice and lower scores representing lesser perceptions of procedural justice.

Interactional justice

The revised interactional justice scale by Chory (2007) was used to assess students' interactional justice perceptions. It has 7 items on which participants evaluate fairness of how the instructor communicates and interacts with students. It has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.95, and examples of items include: "the way the teacher treats students" and "the way the teacher

listens to students". Responses are made on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from *extremely unfair (1)* to *extremely fair(5).* Total scores range from 5 to 35 with higher scores representing perceptions of more interactional justice and lower scores representing lesser perceptions of interactional justice.

Student Empowerment

Perceptions of student empowerment was measured with the learner empowerment scale developed by Frymier, Shulman, and Houser (1996). The original scale had 35 items but the 29 item revised version by Paulsel (2005) was used for this study. The instrument has three subscales namely; meaningfulness, impact and competence. The meaningfulness factor is made of 10 items that assess students' perceptions that the content is valuable and worthy of study, such as "the tasks required of me in the class are personally meaningful." The impact factor consists of 10 items that assess the importance of participating in class and performing well on class assignments, such as "My participation is important to the success of this class." The competence factor consists of 9 items that assess students' perceptions of their confidence and abilities to do well in class, such as "I feel confident that I can adequately perform my duties." When the three dimensions were summed into a single measure of empowerment, it produced an alpha reliability of .89. Responses are based on a Likert-type scale to indicate how often each item corresponds with perceptions of the class. Responses range from *never (0)* to *very often (4).* A score of zero indicates that the student "never" perceived the item. A score of four indicates that the student perceived the item "very often."

Using a method by Plax, Kearney, McCroskey, and Richmond (1986), participants were instructed to report on the instructor they had in class prior to completing the survey.
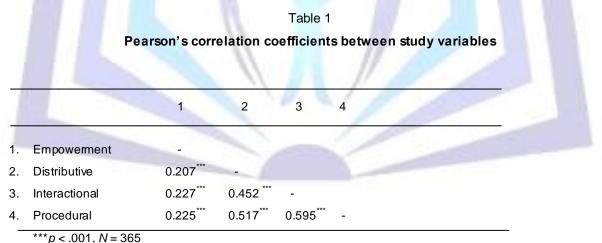
The American Psychological Association (APA, 2002) ethical codes were observed throughout the conduct of the study. As such, the purpose of the study and the role of participants were clearly stated on the questionnaire and further explanations were made verbally.

Pilot Study

In order to identify potential problems and to improve the internal validity of the questionnaire prior to the actual study (Teijlingen van, Rennie, Hundley & Graham, 2001), a sample of 38 students was used for the pilot study. The sample questionnaires were administered the same way as was intended for the main study and participants were asked for feedback to identify ambiguities and difficult questions (Peat, Mellis, Williams, & Xuan 2002).

Following the pilot study, some of the items in the questionnaire were reworded for better understanding. Also, an item on the learner empowerment scale was deemed unnecessary and was removed after pilot study. The reliability of the scales measuring the various variables as obtained in the pilot study is as follows classroom justice: distributive (α=.85), interactional (α=.92), procedural (α=.93) and student empowerment (α=.81).

RESULTS

Table 1

Pearson's correlation coefficients between study variables

		1	2	3	4
1.	Empowerment	-			
2.	Distributive	0.207[***]	-		
3.	Interactional	0.227[***]	0.452[***]	-	
4.	Procedural	0.225[***]	0.517[***]	0.595[***]	-

***$p < .001$, $N = 365$

Hypothesis 1 was tested by an inspection of inter correlations between the variables presented in Table 1. It shows significant positive relationships between all the three forms of classroom justice and student empowerment. Distributive justice (r = .207, $p<.001$), interactional justice (r = .227, $p<.001$) and procedural justice (r =. 225, $p<.001$). This confirms the hypothesis that '*There will be a significant positive relationship between classroom justice and student empowerment*.'

Hypothesis 2 stated that the three forms of classroom justice will be significant predictors of student empowerment. To test this hypothesis, the Standard Regression analysis was used. In so doing, all three forms of justice (distributive, interactional, and procedural) were entered into one model and regressed on the dependent variable (student empowerment). The results from the analysis shows that the model was significant [$F_{(3,361)}$ = 10.26, p=0.000]. Table 2 presents results of the Standard Regression analysis.

Table 2

Summary of Standard Regression analysis of Distributive, Interactional and Procedural justice on Student Empowerment

	Model	B	SEB	β
1	(Constant)	45.659	4.484	
	Distributive justice	0.159	.115	.084
	Interactional Justice	0.229	.151	.097
	Procedural justice	0.208	.091	.154

R^2 = .079,   *p<.05

From Table 2, it can be observed that procedural justice was the only significant predictor of student empowerment in the model (β=.154, p<.05). That is, amongst the classroom justice dimensions, procedural justice emerged as the only predictor of student empowerment. This partially supports hypothesis 2 which stated that "*The three forms of classroom justice will be significant predictors of student empowerment*".

DISCUSSION

The proposed hypothesis relating classroom justice and student empowerment was supported. There was a positive significant relationship between the three dimensions of justice and student empowerment. This means that when students are abreast with practicable regulations and procedures that give fair grades, achievable course objectives and feel equally treated compared to other students, they feel empowered. It implies that teachers can use classroom justice as a way of relating to students and helping them feel empowered. This supports studies that have looked at the positive aspects of justice in the classroom like Chory-Assad's (2002) who found among undergraduate students sample, a positive relationship between classroom justice and student motivation and affective learning, and a negative relationship between classroom justice and student aggression. It is also in line with Paulsel's (2005) study which found that classroom justice predicted student empowerment among undergraduate students in the United States.

Following from the result, there is the indication that to a large extent, justice perceptions influence learning outcomes. Per the social exchange theory, students may see the student teacher relationship as beneficial even as they indulge in reciprocal exchanges of resources. Social exchange theory posits that individuals enter into relationships with others to maximize their benefits (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961). In terms of distributive justice for example, students expect tangible outcomes as rewards in the form of grades. Students' efforts expended in learning and taking part in assignments and exams are the resources exchanged for the grades they receive. The perception that the more distributive justice they perceive, the more empowered students feel means that the student - teacher relationship is seen as mutually beneficial. In the same vein, the social aspect of the theory which involves less tangible resources like the interpersonal treatments students receive, recognition and self-esteem in the exchange relationship are deemed as resulting from students' giving back in the relationship in the form of responding to teachers' orders, adhering to rules and regulations and showing respect. For the fact that there is the perception that these exchanges are mutually beneficial, this might lead to more feelings of empowerment when more interactional and procedural justice is perceived.

Even though the results of this study is similar to results found in individualist cultures like the United States, it is very likely that as collectivists, much emphasis is placed on interpersonal relationships which creates the likelihood of reporting perceptions of fairness to promote group interest. Also, younger people are expected to behave in a respectful and obedient way when interacting with people who are older or of higher social status. Because collectivism defines expectations of individuals from their social system, it may influence how individuals react to perceived justice. And so justice values may not be ranked as high as in an individualistic culture even though there may be similar relationships. It has also been suggested that relationships of collectivists have a normative component where much emphasis is placed on obligation and loyalty (Sullivan, Mitchell & Uhl-Bien, 2003). Following from this, the present sample with collectivism values may feel compelled to maintain positive exchanges even when the relationship defies norms of fairness and principles of exchange. However, there may be possible exceptions to these cultural explanations in that there are differences in individualism/collectivism among people in the same country or culture. Indeed, Triandis (1995) argued that even in countries or cultures described as individualistic there are people who are more collectivist in nature and vice versa.

The second hypothesis was to find out whether the three forms of classroom justice significantly predicted student empowerment. The results showed that the model was significant but procedural justice was the only significant predictor of student empowerment whilst distributive and interactional justice were not significant. This result resonates with other researches that have consistently found procedural justice to be the significant or strongest predictor in terms of justice or injustice to other learning outcomes (Chory-Assad 2002; Paulsel & Chory-Assad 2004). It also supports Horan et al.'s (2010) study which found that students reported procedural injustice three times as often as distributive and interactional justice. This implies that students care about procedures to a very large extent.

During student-teacher interactions, when teachers make clear rules and regulations concerning conduct, grading, and course objectives, it is very likely students reciprocate by adhering to rules and procedures and by conducting themselves in appropriate ways. The exchange of information as a resource is seen as mutually reciprocal hence leading to

perceptions of more just procedures. It could also be the case that rules and procedures are the most clearly spelt out and are the most understood issues when it comes to forming justice perceptions. Indeed Houser and Frymier (2009) alluded to this point that teacher clarity was a strong predictor of student empowerment. According to Chory-Assad and Paulsel (2004b), this tendency of procedural justice emerging as the significant predictor follows a trend in past research which shows that correlations between perceptions of distributive justice and student outcomes tend to be statistically significant, but when subsequent multiple regression analyses are made in those same studies, procedural justice emerged as the only significant predictor. Indeed Scholars have indicated that because procedures are more likely to be regarded as being under the control of the higher organizational system, procedural justice is likely to be the strongest justice predictor of reactions toward the system (Bies & Moag, 1986; Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). So in the instructional context, students may not be perturbed by an occasional unfair grade or poor treatment. So long as the course procedures are perceived to be just, they may have felt they would eventually be treated fairly.

Recommendations for Future Research

Most of the research in this area use university sample. Even though a senior secondary sample was used in this study, future research should consider replicating this research using samples from a different grade level like the junior high schools (JSS) and the basic schools.Further, researchers should collect data by employing a mixed method approach that includes qualitative data, using interviews and open ended questions. This will enable participants report experiences that may not have been captured by structured questionnaires and also check for the cultural appropriateness of measures.

Conclusion

This study sought to look at the positive side of classroom justice research within the social exchange framework, by examining how perceptions of justice relate with students' feelings of empowerment. It was found that generally, students feel more empowered when they perceive justice. Specifically, when students perceive that procedures and rules that are followed to arrive at outcomes are fair, they feel more empowered. The findings highlight the importance of developing rigorous rules and standards to enhance fair grading and treatment of students to increase positive learning outcomes.

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