Organizational Justice in Young Churches: Maximizing Fair Treatment of Others and Responding to Violations

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Abstract

Organizational justice is the perception that one is being treated fairly in an organization, especially by those who hold power, such as the leaders within a church, both lay and staff. These perceptions of fairness (or lack of fairness) will influence church members' commitment to, satisfaction with, and involvement in their church, as well as their psychological and spiritual well-being. Young churches are especially susceptible to the consequences of violations of organizational justice because young churches experience frequent changes in programs and delegation of responsibilities. Leaders of young churches should seek to maximize organizational justice, grounded in biblical principles, in order to have a healthy, functional body of believers who work together to serve God. These leaders need to respond to justice violations with humility, managing any conflicts that occur in effective and constructive ways. They must also work to prevent organizational justice violations in young churches from becoming engrained in the churches' culture.

Keywords: organizational, justice, responsibility, church, violation

Abstrak

Keadilan organisasi adalah persepsi bahwa seseorang diperlakukan secara adil dalam suatu organisasi, terutama oleh mereka yang memegang kekuasaan, seperti para pemimpin di dalam gereja, baik awam maupun staf. Persepsi keadilan ini (atau lemahnya keadilan) akan memengaruhi komitmen anggota gereja dan kepuasan untuk keterlibatan dalam gereja mereka, serta kesejahteraan psikologis dan spiritual mereka. Gereja-gereja pemula sangat rentan terhadap konsekuensi pelanggaran keadilan organisasi karena gereja-gereja pemula sering mengalami perubahan dalam program dan pendelegasian tanggung jawab. Para pemimpin gereja-gereja muda harus berupaya untuk memaksimalkan keadilan organisasional, yang didasarkan pada prinsip-prinsip alkitabiah, untuk memiliki tubuh yang sehat dan fungsional dari orang-orang percaya yang bekerja bersama untuk melayani Tuhan. Para pemimpin ini perlu menanggapi pelanggaran keadilan dengan kerendahan hati, mengelola setiap konflik yang terjadi dengan

cara yang efektif dan konstruktif. Mereka juga harus bekerja untuk mencegah pelanggaran keadilan organisasi di gereja-gereja pemula supaya tidak berakar dalam budaya gereja.

Kata-kata Kunci: organisasi, keadilan, tanggung jawab, gereja, pelanggaran

Introduction

If all goes well, a young church will consist of a community of believers united in serving the Lord in love and righteousness (Rm. 14:15-18, 1 Cor. 3:1-17, 1 Cor. 13:1-13). However, this might not be the case. Although there are many possible reasons for dysfunction (Gal. 5:19-21, Eph. 4:17-31), one possible source of problems is the lack of fairness, or at least a lack of perceived fairness, concerning decisions made in the church, such as was the case concerning the distribution of food to Hellenistic widows in the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:1) or Peter's refusal to eat with Gentiles in Antioch once members of the Jerusalem church were present (Gal. 2:11-13). In the behavioral and organizational sciences, *organizational justice* has been the subject of much research since the 1970s,[1] much of which is relevant to young churches.

Justice, in organizational contexts, can be defined as "the application and use of a set of moral principles for guiding the manner in which one behaves toward other people, at least with respect to outcome distributions, decision processes, and interpersonal treatment."[2] Decisions are considered to be just if people get what they deserve. When some moral principle or behavioral norm is violated, people experience a sense of injustice, feeling that something needs to be done to correct the situation. The violated principles and norms may be stated explicitly, defined by culture, or understood by an underlying psychological contract composed of the expectations that each party has for each other.[3] Injustice

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[1] J. A. Colquitt, D. E. Conlon, M. J. Wesson, C. Porter, & K. Yee Ng, "Justice at the Millennium: A Meta-Analytic Review of 25 Years of Organizational Justice Research," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 86, no. 3 (2001); R. Folger, "Distributive and Procedural Justice: Combined Impact of "Voice" and Improvement on Experienced Inequity," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 35, no. 2 (1977); E. P. Karam, J. Hu, R. B. Davison, M. Juravich, J. D. Nahrgang, S. E. Humphrey & D. S. DeRue, "Illuminating the 'Face' of Justice: A Meta-Analytic Examination of Leadership And Organizational Justice," *Journal of Management Studies* 56, no. 1 (2019).

[2] R. Cropanzano & M. L. Ambrose (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Justice in the Workplace* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015), 4.

[3] D. L. Shapiro, & E. N. Sherf, *The Role of Conflict in Managing Conflict*, in R. Cropanzano & M. L. Ambrose (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Justice in the Workplace* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015), 443-460; John Paul Lathrop, "Conflict In

creates feelings of unease and mistrust, even distrust, and may lead to destructive conflict. In contrast, justice encourages collaboration; people are more willing to work for a common goal when they believe that they will be treated fairly, especially by those in power. Justice is a sign that low-power individuals will not be exploited.[4]

This concept of justice is related to, but different from, the biblical concept of justice or righteousness, typically represented by the מִשְׁפָּט (Hebrew for justice, emphasizing the legal process and decision), צֶדֶק (Hebrew for righteousness, emphasizing the quality of being right, correct), and δίκη (Greek for fair, just) word families.[5] Biblical justice is a reflection of God's moral character and is defined by him, rather than a subjective perception of what an individual experiences. Although organizational justice is narrowly defined as a subjective perception of being treated fairly or not, the feelings that are associated with it have real effects on an individual's behavior and affect the members of young churches in very real ways.

The purpose of this article is to describe the effects of organizational justice, to examine ways leaders can maximize it in young churches, and to describe appropriate ways they should respond to organizational injustices. Leaders of young churches, including head pastors, other full-time Christian workers, board members, and lay leaders, all may be either instigators of justice or victims of injustice. This article provides conceptual tools supported by empirical data which can enable all these leaders to "seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33 NIV) and to help the people in their churches experience the same.

Method

This paper is a review of both the theoretical and empirical literature concerning organizational justice, especially the literature written from the perspectives of social and organizational psychology. It extends organizational theory by incorporating theological and missiological principles and applies the theory to young churches so that they might function more effectively.

The Church: The Uncomfortable Reality," *Jurnal Jaffray* 13, no. 2 (September 16, 2015): 185, https://doi.org/10.25278/jj71.v13i2.177.

[4] Cropanzano & Ambrose.

[5] R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, & B. K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Vol. 1-2) (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980); G. Kittel, & G. Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985).

Discussion

The Effects of Perceived Justice (and Injustice) in Organizations

Hundreds of empirical studies have focused on the various effects of organizational justice and what happens when people perceive an injustice in organizational contexts.[6] When a decision is made by leaders which seems unfair, members of the organization are not just unsatisfied with the decision, but they become dissatisfied with their role in the organizations.[7] This means that if a church member who works with children believes that one of the musicians in the worship team has been treated with disrespect by a church leader, it is quite possible that her level of satisfaction with the children's ministry, and the church as a whole, will decrease.

Similarly, organizational justice is positively correlated to organizational commitment, the level of attachment that a person has to an organization as a whole, whether it be an emotional attachment, a need-based attachment, or a sense of duty to the organization.[8] In churches, as in all organizations, organizational commitment is affected by many factors.[9] Organizational commitment in churches is especially important because the church is the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-14, Eph. 4:1-16) and one's commitment to the body of Christ is in some ways a measure of one's commitment to Christ in general. When church members see a church leader acting unjustly, whether through an obvious sin like embezzlement or more subtly through refusing to communicate information about how a decision was made, people's commitment to the church decreases and they are less likely to maintain their level of involvement. Perceptions of injustice are also associated with greater turnover and absenteeism in organizations,[10] a problem that is especially dangerous in young churches where the loss of any member can have a severe impact on the functioning of the church.[11]

Although Christians are called to do good to all people, especially

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[6] Colquitt et al.; Cropanzano & Ambrose; Karam et al.

[7] Colquitt et al.

[8] Colquitt et al.; J. P. Meyer, & N. J. Allen, "A Three-Component Conceptualization of Organizational Commitment," *Human Resource Management Review* 1, no. 1 (1991).

[9] D. R. Dunaetz, M. Cullum, & E. Barron, "Church Size, Pastoral Humility, and Member Characteristics as Predictors of Church Commitment," *Theology of Leadership Journal* 1, no. 2 (2018).

[10] Colquitt et al.; H. Nadiri, & C. Tanova, "An Investigation of the Role of Justice in Turnover Intentions, Job Satisfaction, and Organizational Citizenship Behavior in Hospitality Industry," *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 29, no. 1 (2010).

[11] D. R. Dunaetz, *Personality and Conflict Style: Effects on Membership Duration in Voluntary Associations* (Saarbrücken, Germany: Lambert Academic Press, 2011).

those in God's family (Gal. 6:10), going out of one's way to help others (known as organizational citizenship behaviors in the social sciences) decreases when the level of perceived justice goes down in an organization.[12] Members of an organization, such as a church, are less willing to invest in the well-being of others in the organization when they see the leaders of the organization act in ways that are not God-honoring. Similarly, deviant behaviors such as backbiting and retaliation increase when members believe they have been treated unjustly by an organization's leaders.[13]

Injustice is especially damaging to the relationship that the victim has to the perceived violator of justice, typically, the pastor or other church leader. We decide how willing we are to trust, work with, and cooperate with people based, on a large part, by how fair we perceive them to be, a phenomena known as the fairness heuristic.[14] When we observe a leader's level of fairness, we develop beliefs about how much the leader, and the organization as a whole, values our contributions and cares about our well-being.[15] In young churches, by observing how leaders treat people, members will develop beliefs about the degree to which their involvement will be appreciated and rewarded, the degree to which the church will meet their social and emotional needs, and the degree to which the church will support their involvement in ministry. Any decisions that seem unfair will have a strong negative effect on these beliefs.

Because organizational justice, the perception of being treated fairly or not, has so many consequences on the members of young churches, church leaders need to understand the various ways that organizational justice is manifested and how to maximize each of these forms.

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[12] Colquitt et al.; H. Nadiri, & C. Tanova; D. P. Skarlicki, & G. P. Latham, Increasing Citizenship Behavior within a Labor Union: A Test of Organizational Justice Theory," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 81, no. 2 (1996).

[13] L. J. Barclay, & M. F. Saldanha, *Recovering from organizational injustice: New directions in theory and research* in R. Cropanzano & M. L. Ambrose (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Justice in the Workplace*, 497-522; Colquitt et al.; T. M. Tripp, & R. J. Bies, *'Doing justice': The Role of Motives For Revenge in the Workplace*, in R. Cropanzano & M. L. Ambrose (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Justice in the Workplace*, 461-475.

[14] E. Allan Lind, "Fairness Heuristic Theory: Justice Judgments as Pivotal Cognitions in Organizational Relations," in J. Greenberg & R. Cropanzano (Eds.), *Advances in Organization Justice* (Stanford University Press), 56-88.

[15] L. Rhoades, & R. Eisenberger, "Perceived Organizational Support: A Review of the Literature," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 87 (2002).

Maximizing Organizational Justice in Young Churches

Four forms of organizational justice have been studied extensively.[16] Distributive justice refers to the actual decision that affects a person, typically concerning the distribution of resources, rewards, or privileges.[17] The other forms refer to dimensions concerning how these decisions are made or enacted: procedural justice,[18] interpersonal justice,[19] and informational justice.[20] Research indicates that when conflict occurs in churches, triggered by a breach of distributive justice, the presence of other forms of justice have a greater impact on the outcome of the conflict than a simple change of the initial decision would have.[21]

Distributive Justice

In James 5:1-6, powerful employers are condemned for withholding wages from laborers. This is an example of a violation of distributive justice. In young churches, distributive justice is necessary when deciding how to use church resources such as money, use of facilities, and use of time during programmed meetings. Distributive justice is also necessary in delegating responsibilities to leaders, especially if such responsibilities are associated with status or honor.

Typically, justice violations are perceived by church members when decisions seem immoral or are based on unfair allocation rules.[22] Moral

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[16] J. A. Colquitt, "On the Dimensionality of Organizational Justice: A Construct Validation of a Measure," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 86 (2001); D. R. Dunaetz, *Organizational justice: Perceptions of being fairly treated*, in D. Baker & D. Hayward (Eds.), *Serving Jesus with integrity: Ethics and accountability in mission* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library 2010), 197-221.

[17] K. Törnblom, & A. Kazemi, *Distributive justice: Revisiting past statements and reflecting on future prospects*, in R. Cropanzano & M. L. Ambrose (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of justice in the workplace*, 15-50.

[18] D. R. Bobocel, & L. Gosse, *Procedural justice: A historical review and critical analysis*, in R. Cropanzano & M. L. Ambrose (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of justice in the workplace*, 51-88; E. A. Lind, & T. R. Tyler, *The Social Psychology of Procedural Justice* (New York.: Plenum Publishing Corporation, 1988).

[19] R. J. Bies, *Interactional justice: Looking backward and looking forward*, in R. Cropanzano & M. L. Ambrose (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of justice in work organizations*, 89-107; J. Greenberg, *The social side of fairness: Interpersonal and informational classes of organizational justice*, in R. Cropanzano (Ed.), *Justice in the workplace: Approaching fairness in human resource management* (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1993), 79-103.

[20] Greenberg, *The social side of fairness: Interpersonal and informational classes of organizational justice*.

[21] D. R. Dunaetz, "Mission in evolving cultures: Constructively managing music-related conflict in cross-cultural church planting contexts," *Missiology: An International Review* 44 (2016a); Dunaetz, "Constructively managing program-related conflict in local churches," *Christian Education Journal* 16 (2019).

[22] E. P. Karam, et al.

standards in young churches should come from the Bible, and thus need to be taught regularly. The application of appropriate allocation rules is often complex, requiring wisdom according to the situation. Three allocation rules applicable to young churches are need, equality, and equity.[23]

Need-based allocation of resources should be used to meet individuals' basic physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Some of the widows in the early church had physical needs that the church strived to meet (Acts 6:1-7, 1 Tim. 5:3-16) because the widows had no resources of their own. The abuse of need-based allocation of physical resources has always been a problem (1 Tim. 5:16, 2 Thess. 3:11-13), so wisdom and accountability are necessary to ensure fairness to all. In response to basic emotional needs, those who are mourning, those who are suffering from a loss or a family dysfunction, and those who have undergone some sort of injustice should receive priority pastoral support from a young church's leadership. Likewise, new believers should receive one-on-one teaching and discipleship as a priority based on their need relative to more mature Christians. People experiencing some sort of spiritual or emotional crisis would have a similar need-based right to pastoral resources.

Equality-based allocation of resources in a young church may include the fair treatment of all ethnic and cultural groups (cf. Acts 6:1-7). Similarly, church leadership should strive to ensure that teaching and discipleship opportunities are available to all, not just to individuals who are able to participate in a limited program of activities due to their schedules, location, or family responsibilities.

Equity is the distribution of resources and privileges based on a person's abilities and contributions.[24] This principle explains why medical doctors have higher salaries than fast-food cashiers. It is closely related to the New Testament concept of spiritual gifts (Rm. 12:3-8, 1 Cor. 12:1-11, Eph. 4:1-13, 1 Pet. 4:10-11). Although no person is more valuable than another person because of his or her gift (1 Cor. 12:12-31), responsibilities should be assigned based on an individual's gifting. This is especially difficult in young churches where the gifting of people in the church might not correspond to the needs of a church, or when more gifted people arrive in the church, displacing those who previously were the proverbial "big fish in the small pond." Suppose for example that the founding pastor of a young church cannot preach every Sunday due to other responsibilities. He may ask the next most qualified person in the church to preach occasionally on Sundays when he cannot be there, even though this person

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[23] M. Deutsch, "Equity, equality, and need: What determines which value will be used as the basis of distributive justice?" *Journal of Social Issues* 31 (1975).

[24] J. S. Adams, *Inequity in social exchange*, in L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 2) (New York, NY: Academic Press, 1965), 267-299.

might not be especially gifted to preach. As the church grows, people more gifted in communication and public speaking may become members, reducing the need for the non-gifted member to preach, much to the relief of the rest of the congregation. Churches function best when each member is using his or her gifts appropriately.

However, in such a situation, the non-gifted ex-preacher may feel hurt and believe he is being treated unjustly because of being displaced. In such a situation, the other forms of organizational justice (procedural, interpersonal, and informational) are especially needed.

Procedural Justice

Procedural justice is "the fairness of the procedures used to determine outcome distributions."[25] Choosing deacons with Hellenistic names to ensure fair distribution of food to the Hellenistic widows in Acts 6 is an example of a fair procedure. Solomon's proposal to cut a baby in half (1 Kings 3:16-28) was an example of an unjust procedure which provoked a strong negative response in the most interested party, enabling Solomon to respond in a truly just way. If a decision is perceived to be made in a fair way, even the party disadvantaged by the decision is much more likely to accept and support the decision.[26]

When people in a church believe that a decision has been made in a fair way, they are more likely to trust the leader's judgment even if the decision doesn't personally suit them. One of the primary ways that a person determines if the decision is fair is by whether or not the person believes that his or her point of view has been heard and understood, a phenomenon known as having *voice*.[27] Since people in a young church generally trust the pastor, or at least will give him the benefit of the doubt for a while, if the pastor listens to a person and demonstrates that he has understood his or her position, the person is more likely to trust the pastor's judgment than if he or she does not feel understood. This means that leaders of young churches must not just clearly state their own views, but also listen to, understand, and demonstrate this understanding of other people's point of view on the issue at hand. This will not only help the decision to *appear fairer*, but will actually cause the decision to *be fairer*.

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[25] Colquitt et al., 425.

[26] D. R. Bobocel, & L. Gosse; J. Brockner, & B. M. Wiesenfeld, "The interactive impact of procedural fairness and outcome favorability: The effect of what you do depends on how you do it," *Psychological Bulletin* 120 (1996); M. A. Korsgaard, D. M. Schweiger, & H. J. Sapienza, "Building commitment, attachment, and trust in strategic decision-making teams: The role of procedural justice," *The Academy of Management Journal* 38 (1995).

[27] R. Folger, "Distributive and Procedural Justice: Combined Impact of "Voice" and Improvement on Experienced Inequity," (1977).

By taking the other person's point of view into consideration to such an extent that the other person believes his or her view has been understood and considered, the leaders will have to process more relevant information, enabling them to make fairer and wiser decisions.

Humans use several standards to determine if a decision has been made in a fair way. Here are several which are the most relevant for young churches.

Are decisions characterized by consistency across time, situations, and people? Or is favoritism shown, such as the favoritism shown to high status people in some young churches as described in James 2:1-13?

Are the decisions bias-free? Or do they reflect the leader's preferences and interests at the expense of the well-being of others? Because of self-serving biases,[28] we often down-play the importance of other people's interests and assume that our own interests best reflect the optimal solution. Humility requires that we admit our own biases and seek out wisdom from others.

Has accurate information been used in making the decision, and if not, can the decision be corrected? If a person believes that relevant information has been left out of a decision, for example, concerning who should lead worship on Sunday morning, the person is more likely to see the decision as being unjust. This is especially true if the decision is seen as set in stone, unable to be modified. Modifying a decision may bother a leader, requiring him or her to admit that a previous decision was faulty, but once again, humility requires such corrections. The apostle Paul admitted his mistake in the way he addressed the high priest (Acts 23:4-5). "In humility value others above yourselves" (Phil. 2:3, NIV).

Does the decision conform to ethical standards? For the Christian, ethical standards are determined by God's Word. If the decision is inconsistent with biblical standards, then others are right to confront the leader concerning his or her decision, as Paul did to Peter concerning his refusal to eat with Gentiles (Gal. 2:11-13). Leaders must again respond in humility and question whether their own biases have influenced their understanding and application of the relevant biblical principles.

Interpersonal Justice

A third type of organizational justice is *interpersonal justice*, defined as treating a person with respect and dignity.[29] For Christian leaders, this

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[28] D. T. Miller, & M. Ross, "Self-serving biases in the attribution of causality: Fact or fiction," *Psychological Bulletin* 82 (1975); L. Ross, D. Greene, & P. House, "The false consensus effect: An egocentric bias in social perception and attribution processes," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 13 (1977).

[29] Bies, *Interactional justice: Looking backward and looking forward.*

means empowering other people rather than dominating them and "lording it over them," the type of interaction with followers that must be avoided at all costs in young churches (Mk. 10:42-43). When leaders interact with followers in a way that demonstrates that the leaders' value them, believe that their feelings and opinions matter, and seek their well-being, they are more willing to commit themselves to the vision that their leaders promote, to cooperate with them, and to work together. Research indicates that a lack of respect is most damaging when people are considering joining an organization, when they first join an organization, when they are denied resources after requesting them, during conflict, and during periods of organizational change.[30]

In young churches, such situations occur quite regularly. For example, young churches tend to be more flexible than older churches and can abandon or modify ineffective programs more frequently. However, people involved in these ministries might be heavily invested in them and see any attempt to change them as a personal attack on their work. It is extremely important for leaders to show respect to people who will be affected by change and to implement the changes in a way that maintains these people's dignity, value, and contribution to the church. This means that the leader may have to invest significant time and effort into maintaining and developing these relationships, time that may not always seem productive, in order to make the changes in a way that seems fair and is fair.

Informational Justice

Providing the information and reasoning used to make decisions is known as *informational justice*.[31] Without proper information about how decisions have been made, people often feel abused, deceived, or demeaned. In Acts 15, we have a long description of the early church leaders deciding on how to incorporate Gentiles into the Christian community. The author Luke provides a detailed account of what was said at the meeting along with the text of the decision. By providing all this information, the decision made by the leadership of the young community is more credible and more likely to be judged as being fair.

Members of young churches will use several criteria to decide if a decision is fair, based on the information they receive.[32] First, the

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[30] Bies; Karam et al.

[31] Colquitt; Folger, & Cropanzano, *Organizational justice and human resource management* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998); Greenberg.

[32] Bies; Colquitt; Dunaetz, *Organizational justice: Perceptions of being fairly treated*, in D. Baker & D. Hayward (Eds.), *Serving Jesus with integrity: Ethics and accountability in mission* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2010), 197-221; Greenberg.

information must be *true*. Any feeling of being deceived will leave church members mistrustful and skeptical of the value of the church. Similarly, the information must provide *sufficient justification* for the decision, especially if one or more people consider the decision contrary to their interests or preferences. Without sufficient justification, people are more likely to feel that information is being withheld so that a powerful decision-maker can get his or her way for personal advantage, not for the good of the young church. Furthermore, the information must be *logically consistent*. Any flaws of reasoning will communicate incompetence or a desire to deceive among the church's leadership. Likewise, to be considered fair, leaders must provide information that is *timely*, that is, at the moment when church members believe they need it. Delays in information, or making it difficult to obtain, may be interpreted as attempts to deceive. Finally, information communicated to the church must be *clear and specific*. Vague or general statements, especially concerning programs or people that church members care for, may be interpreted as an attempt to hide unethical behavior.

Justice violations, whether distributive, procedural, interactional, or informational, provoke strong reactions in members of young churches. Regardless of whether an injustice was actually committed or not, church leaders need to address these perceived violations with humility and openness.

Responding to Perceptions of Justice Violations

Although few, if any, Christian leaders enter into a ministry with a desire to act unjustly, human limitations, weaknesses, and sin inevitably lead to behaviors which are perceived as being unjust. In young churches, all perceived injustice needs to be addressed before such behaviors and tolerance for them become ingrained into the church culture.[33] At the same time, leaders of young churches, including pastoral staff and members of church boards, need to be aware of the damage that can be caused by false accusations, damage which can be as great as, or greater than, the damage associated with a justified accusation.

When the Offender Recognizes the Offense

When the offender, typically a church leader, recognizes that he or she has acted unjustly, there are a number of approaches that the leader can use to remedy the situation. First would be to apologize for the offense

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[33] M. J. Gelfand, L. M. Leslie, K. Keller, & C. K. W. de Dreu, "Conflict cultures in organizations: How leaders shape conflict cultures and their organizational-level consequences," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 97 (2012); E. H. Schein, *Organizational culture and leadership* (3rd ed.) (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004).

and correct the injustice (Matt. 5:23-24; Jam. 5:16).[34] If the person one has offended is close (or should be close) relationally, it is essential that empathy and understanding accompany the apology. If the church leader has violated some sort of biblical norms, he or she needs to recognize that the standards have been violated and to reiterate his or her commitment to biblical norms.

Besides apologizing and correcting the offense that occurred, the leader of a young church needs to increase interpersonal justice, by showing increased respect to those offended, and informational justice, by clearly communicating what is being done to remedy the situation and follow the community's norms, especially those rooted in the Bible.[35] This may not be easy for the leader because the decision that was offensive may have been made strategically for the good of the congregation. But if the decision was executed in a way that showed disrespect or did not include the necessary information to bring the whole church in line with the vision and end goal of the decision, leaders of young churches need to humbly admit their error and correct the situation.

When a Leader Feels Unfairly Treated

Sometimes it is a church leader who feels that he or she has been treated unjustly by someone, either a staff person, a lay member, or the board as a whole. Such offenses can generate very strong or negative emotions because if the leader is in full-time Christian ministry, even false accusations can lead to his or her firing, loss of income, and loss of identity.[36] The worst response from the leader would be to enact revenge upon the offender,[37] perhaps by humiliating him or her, enacting a punishment (such as removing him or her from a desirable ministry), or purposefully harming his or her public reputation. Responding to evil with evil is never appropriate for the Christian leader (Rom. 12:17-21). Slightly less damaging would be to avoid the offender, perhaps by simply ignoring the person or by ostracizing him or her in social situations. Far more appropriate is forgiveness, an internal act of letting go of anger and the desire to see harm come upon the offender (Mk. 11:25, Eph. 4:32). With

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[34] Barclay, & Saldanha; R. Fehr, & M. J. Gelfand, "When apologies work: How matching apology components to victims' self-construals facilitates forgiveness," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 113 (2010).

[35] Barclay, & Saldanha.

[36] M. N. Tanner, J. N. Wherry, & A. M. Zvonkovic, "Clergy who experience trauma as a result of forced termination," *Journal of Religion and Health* (2012), doi: 10.1007/s10943-012-9571-3; M. N. Tanner, A. M. Zvonkovic, & C. Adams, "Forced termination of American clergy: Its effects and connection to negative well-being," *Review of Religious Research* 54 (2012).

[37] Barclay, & Saldanha.

the power of the Holy Spirit, such forgiveness is always possible (Heb. 12:15). Even better, but not always possible, is reconciliation with the offender (Matt. 5:23-26, 18:15-17; 2 Cor. 5:18-21). Such reconciliation typically begins with an act of goodwill, such as a word of encouragement, thanks, or affirmation. However, for the relationship to be fully restored, both parties must be willing to be reconciled (Rom. 12:18).

When the Offender Does not Recognize the Offense

Sometimes leaders of young churches do not want to recognize an offense or admit to wrong-doing when a member of the church believes he or she has been treated unjustly. Perhaps this is because the church leader has been perfectly blameless and has committed no wrong.

However, there are other reasons for a person not wanting to admit that he or she has acted unjustly. Refusing to apologize has a number of psychological benefits. Okimoto, Wenzel, and Hendrick conducted a fascinating experiment where participants were randomly assigned to groups to write a letter to someone who had actually been offended by something the participant had done.[38] One group was instructed to refuse to apologize and another group was instructed to apologize for the offense. After writing the letter, those who refused to apologize had higher self-esteem, a greater sense of power, and a stronger belief in their own integrity compared to those who apologized. Since many people are highly motivated to maintain their self-esteem, have power, and believe that they act with integrity, apologizing for wrong doing is costly, sometimes too costly for church leaders. It is much easier to simply cut off communication or ostracize the offender.[39] As the apostle James said in response to unjust behavior in the church, "My brothers and sister, this should not be" (James 3:10, NIV).

Acts of retribution against an accuser when a leader (such as a pastor or board member) is accused of injustice, regardless of the legitimacy of the accusation, usually are not framed in the leader's mind as revenge or an attempt to protect or restore the leader's status. Rather, the one accusing the leader of injustice is viewed by the accused pastor or board member as being unjust himself (or herself). This belief may motivate the leader to punish the accuser rather than to listen to the person and work towards reconciliation. The leader may thus feel justified in inflicting harm on the person by teaching the accuser a supposed lesson so that he or she can grow spiritually or to deter the accuser from future acts of injustice.

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[38] T. G. Okimoto, M. Wenzel, & K. Hedrick, "Refusing to apologize can have psychological benefits (and we issue no mea culpa for this research finding)," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 43 (2013).

[39] Barclay, & Saldanha.

Alternatively, rather than refusing to apologize or to work toward reconciliation, accusations that feel unjust can be managed constructively.[40] The dominant model in the conflict research literature is the *dual concern model* of conflict management[41] which is well summarized by the apostle Paul, "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:4, ESV). In this model, the interests of two parties are represented by two sets of concerns. These sets of concerns may be quite broad, not limited to the actual subject of the conflict, but including social goals such as maintaining or improving a relationship, saving face, and fairness in the conflict resolution process.[42] Each party may or may not be concerned for his or her own interests, as well as the interests of the other party. Conflict (at least over significant issues) is best managed by a high concern for one's own interests and a high concern for the interests of others. When both parties highly value both sets of concerns, they are more likely to find a solution or resolution to the conflict which responds to the majority of each party's concerns. This is known as an *integrative solution* because it integrates the concerns of both parties into the final agreement.[43] In organizational settings, such as young churches, integrative solutions create the highest level of satisfaction for people directly involved in the conflict and the best outcomes for the organization as a whole.[44]

Preventing Future Organizational Injustice Violations
In addition to managing present and past violations of organizational justice, leaders of young churches should strive to reduce

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[40] Dunaetz, "Mission in evolving cultures: Constructively managing music-related conflict in cross-cultural church planting contexts;" Dunaetz, "Constructively managing program-related conflict in local churches;" Dunaetz, & A. Greenham, "Power or concerns: Contrasting perspectives on missionary conflict," *Missiology: An International Review* 46 (2018).

[41] D. G. Pruitt, & S. H. Kim, *Social conflict: Escalation, stalemate, and settlement* (3rd ed.) (Boston, MA: McGraw Hill, 2004); Rhoades, & Carnevale, "The behavioral context of strategic choice in negotiation: A test of the dual concern model," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 29 (1999); R. L. Sorenson, E. A. Morse, & G. T. Savage, "A test of the motivations underlying choice of conflict strategies in the dual-concern model," *International Journal of Conflict Management* 10 (1999).

[42] K. A. Jehn, "A quantitative analysis of conflict types and dimensions in organizational groups," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 42 (1997).

[43] R. Fisher, W. Ury, & B. Patton, *Getting to yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991).

[44] D. R. Dunaetz, "The achievement of conflict-related goals leads to satisfaction with conflict outcomes" (CGU Theses & Dissertations, Paper 89), http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgu_etd/89; M. A. Rahim, *Managing conflict in organizations* (3rd ed.) (Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 2001).

future violations. This would include regular teaching concerning behavior affecting others, both in the church and in broader social contexts. Detailed examples of distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice need to be presented regularly, and even more importantly, such behaviors and attitudes need to be modeled by the young church's leaders. This is only possible when the leaders are highly committed to serving the community of God's people in humility, in contrast to dominating or forcing their will their will upon them (Mk 10:42-43).

Conclusion

God has called Christians to serve him through local churches. As the gospel spreads throughout the world and new churches are started, Christian leaders need to do all that is possible to lead these communities of Christ-followers into full obedience to the gospel by loving one another and treating one another fairly. Organizational justice is a useful concept for understanding the degree to which church members and leaders feel they are being treated fairly by others. Fairness concerning the distribution of resources, the processes by which decisions are made, the interactions among members, and the availability of needed information all contribute to the health of a young church, enabling the community to fully experience the power of the love of Christ.

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