ABSTRACT

This study examined students’ satisfaction, identification, and extrarole behaviors in the academic context. Path analysis showed that the relationship between beliefs in justice for the self and extrarole behaviors was mediated by satisfaction and identification. Also, beliefs in fairness for others had no impact on any of the other variables. This highlights the importance of perceptions of justice for the self, but leaves open questions about the importance of perceptions of justice for others. Applications of these findings in the academic context are considered.

METHOD

Participants

UWSP students (N = 220) completed an online survey adapted from existing, validated measures of the variables.

Procedure and Measures

Justice Beliefs. Students completed measures (adapted from Lucas et al., 2010) of distributive justice for the self and others (e.g., “I am people are generally subjected to outcomes that are fair”) and procedural justice for self and others (e.g., “I am people are generally subjected to processes that are fair.”) All questions used 7-point Likert-type response scales.

Satisfaction, Identification, and Extrarole Behaviors. Students completed measures adapted from Blader and Tyler (2009): 12 items for satisfaction with courses, instructors, and grades (e.g., “I am satisfied with the courses I have taken.”); 14 items for pride with the university, respect, and esteem (e.g., “Academically, I feel proud to be a part of UWSP.”); and 7 items for the engagement in extrarole behaviors while at college (e.g., “I am generally more inclined to invest more effort into my academic career than is required.”). All items used 7-point Likert-type response scales.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Principal Component Analysis was used to identify the factor structure of the variables. The revised scales for justice beliefs were shown to reflect four factors. The different items for satisfaction, identification, and extrarole behaviors were shown to reflect just one factor each. Scores for each of the factors were created by taking the mean of all of the corresponding items (all Cronbach’s alphas were greater than .85).

Path Analysis

Relationships among the variables were tested using Path Analysis. Path Analysis involves conducting a series of Multiple Regression analyses in order to identify the unique relationships among variables in a particular hypothesized causal model.

Figure 1 presents the trimmed path model (i.e. the final model after removing non-significant paths). It shows that procedural justice and distributive justice for the self significantly predicted satisfaction and identification, whereas procedural and distributive justice for others had no effect on satisfaction and identification. In turn, satisfaction and identification significantly predicted extrarole behaviors. Perceptions of fairness for the self and for others had no direct effect on extrarole behaviors.

DISCUSSION

In general, results showed that students who believed that processes and outcomes were fair exhibited more pride and satisfaction with their university which, in turn, led them to be more willing to exceed minimal classroom requirements. This is consistent with previous justice research (e.g., Dalbert, 1999) which demonstrates that fairness for the self is particularly critical and that it may ultimately influence how someone chooses to act.

Importantly, beliefs in justice for others had no impact on satisfaction, identification, or extrarole behaviors. This finding partially parallels that of Lucas et al. (2010), who found that procedural justice beliefs for others had no impact on well-being or on harsh social attitudes. Perhaps future research needs to consider additional extraneous variables or to further define cases where perceptions of fairness for others can have a critical impact on social behavior.

These findings are important not just for research on organizational justice in general, but for understanding the functioning of the university in particular. Monitoring fairness and the overall satisfaction of students on campus is a priority, as the examination of student attitudes can aid both professors and other university administrators.

For example, current discussions on campus have centered on student retention. These results suggest that students’ perceptions of fairness can play a role in increasing students’ commitment to the university. Similarly, these results suggest that students who experience fair procedures and fair outcomes are overall more willing to give back to their university. In turn, this improves the campus for future generations.

REFERENCES

