

# Organizational equity, employee productivity and work life balance: Basis for employee engagement framework in public university

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## Abstract

Public universities in China play a crucial role in national development and human capital formation. However, they face growing challenges like intense competition for funding, high faculty pressure, and faculty recruitment and retention difficulties. These challenges often stem from complex factors, including potentially limited organizational equity, fluctuating employee productivity, and inadequate work-life balance for academic staff. This research delves into the critical connections between organizational equity, employee productivity, and work-life balance within the unique context of public universities in China. It aimed to understand how these three factors interact and influence employee engagement, a vital element for university success. Specifically, this paper described organizational equity in terms of procedural, distributive and interactive fairness; evaluated the employee's productivity with reference to salaries and incentives, systems and procedures and group dynamics; determined the respondent's work life balance in terms of Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL), Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW), and Work/Personal Life Enhancement (WPLE); tested the significant relationship between organizational equity, employee productivity and work-life balance; and developed a framework that will improve employee productivity. The study used a quantitative research design and a survey questionnaire was used to collect data from 400 administrators, teachers and staff of one public university in Huinan, China. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis. The findings revealed that the respondents moderately agreed on organizational equity in terms of procedural, distributive and interactive fairness, system and procedures and group dynamics affect employee's productivity and that work interference with personal life, personal life interference with work and work/personal life enhancement affect work life balance. There is a high positive relationship between organizational equity, employee's productivity and work life balance. A strong positive relationship between organizational equity and employee engagement signifies that fair practices and procedures foster a high level of dedication and enthusiasm among administrators, teachers and staff of public universities.

**Keywords:** organizational equity, employee productivity, work life balance

## **Organizational equity, employee productivity and work life balance: Basis for employee engagement framework in public university**

### **1. Introduction**

Success of any organization depends upon how its people is doing their respective role to achieve the organization's goals and objectives. Many of the business organization is investing on how they can make their people engage in their work, employees who are committed to their work and to their organization. Engaged employees are motivated to perform their best and to go the extra mile. They are also more likely to be loyal to their employers and to stay with the company for the long term. A study by Gallup found that companies with high employee engagement levels had 21% higher profitability than companies with low employee engagement levels. The study analyzed data from over 1 million employees in 277 organizations and the study also found that employee engagement was linked to a number of other positive outcomes, including: higher productivity, lower turnover, improved customer satisfaction, better safety records and increased innovation. The study's findings suggest that employee engagement is a critical factor for organizational success and that companies that invest in employee engagement are more likely to be profitable and successful.

Organizational equity, employee productivity, and work-life balance are three essential elements for employee engagement. Organizational equity refers to the fair and just treatment of all employees, regardless of their race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other factors. Employee productivity is the measure of how much work an employee produces in a given period of time. Work-life balance is the ability of employees to maintain a healthy balance between their work and personal lives. When employees feel that they are treated fairly and equitably, they are more likely to be productive and engaged in their work. When employees have a good work-life balance, they are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs and less likely to experience stress and burnout.

Organizational equity is important for employee engagement because it creates a workplace where all employees feel valued and respected. When employees feel that they are treated fairly, they are more likely to be motivated to work hard and contribute to the team. Organizational equity is a key driver of employee engagement. (e.g., Saks, 2006; Wright et al., 2017). There are a number of ways to promote organizational equity. One important step is to develop policies and procedures that are fair and impartial. This includes things like hiring and promotion practices, compensation and benefits, and performance evaluations. Another important step is to create a workplace culture that values diversity and inclusion. This means fostering an environment where all employees feel comfortable sharing their ideas and perspectives. It also means taking steps to address any discrimination or harassment that may occur.

Employee productivity is important for employee engagement because it allows employees to feel a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction in their work. When employees are productive, they are able to see the results of their hard work and make a meaningful contribution to the team. There are a number of things that organizations can do to improve employee productivity. One important step is to provide employees with the resources and tools they need to do their jobs effectively. This includes things like training and development opportunities, access to technology, and a comfortable and productive work environment. Another important step is to set clear and realistic goals for employees. This helps employees to stay focused and motivated. It is also important to provide employees with feedback on their performance so that they can identify areas for improvement.

Work-life balance is important for employee engagement because it allows employees to have a healthy and fulfilling life outside of work. When employees have a good work-life balance, they are more likely to be less stressed and more productive at work. There are a number of things that organizations can do to help employees

achieve a good work-life balance. One important step is to offer flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting or flextime. This allows employees to have more control over their work hours and gives them the flexibility to balance their work and personal commitments. Another important step is to create a culture that supports work-life balance. This means encouraging employees to take breaks, vacations, and sick leave. It also means being understanding when employees need to take time off for personal reasons. Organizational equity, employee productivity, and work-life balance are three essential elements for employee engagement. Organizations that want to create a more engaged workforce should develop and implement a framework that addresses all three of these areas.

**Objectives of the Study** - This study explores the relationship between organizational equity, employee productivity and work balance to develop a framework that will improve the work engagement of administrator, teachers and staff in One Public University in Huinan, China. Specifically, assessed organizational equity in terms of procedural, distributive and interactive fairness; determined the employee's productivity with reference to salaries and incentives, systems and procedures and group dynamics; described the respondent's work life balance in terms of Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL), Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW), and Work/Personal Life Enhancement (WPLE); tested the significant relationship between organizational equity, employee productivity and work-life balance and developed an employee engagement framework for public university.

## 2. Methods

**Research Design** - A descriptive research design was used in this study for an adequate and precise interpretation of the findings. According to the study of Leiva Candia et al. (2022), the descriptive method of research is a type of research that obtains relevant facts, data, and information at the present state, providing a precise outline of situations, people, or events. Laccourreye et al. (2021) also shared that descriptive research seeks to study and monitor an arising sensation that cannot be recognized by an impartial factor. The researcher seeks to gather information from the respondents by providing survey questionnaires and distributing them. This descriptive kind of research will be helpful in collecting the respondents' data efficiently. The study used the purposive sampling technique to determine the required sample of e respondents. For the minimum target sample of the study, the researcher used Raosoft Calculator to determine the sample size with a 5% error and confidence level of 95%, and a sample size of 400.

**Participant of the Study** - The 400 questionnaires were distributed through the Internet, the respondents were teachers, administrators and other employees of Huinan Normal University a public university in Huinan City, Anhui province. According to Sharma (2017), sampling techniques are only considered when testing all the individuals is impossible considering the time, cost, and convenience. For this reason, the researcher used convenience sampling in this study primarily because they are available, willing, and accessible in the time of data gathering (Etikan, et al., 2016).

**Instrument of the Study** - The study used three sets of questionnaires as the major mechanism for collecting the necessary data. The items per instrument have been presented as descriptive statements, and respondents indicate the frequency with which each statement applies on a four-point Likert scale as a 3.50 – 4.0 scale means strongly agree, 2.50 – 3.49 rate means agree, 1.50 – 2.49 scale means disagree and, 1.00 – 1.49 rating means strongly disagree. The self-made questionnaire was composed of three parts. Part I contains assessment on organizational equity with five indicators for each domain's procedural fairness, distributive fairness and interactive fairness. Part II contains the assessment of the employees productivity using domains such salaries and incentives, systems and procedures and group dynamics having five indicators each. In Part III, the questionnaire for measuring work life balance using as domains: work interference with personal life, personal life interference with work and work/ personal life enhancement each has five indicators. A pilot test was undertaken to determine the survey questionnaire's efficacy. 20 samples were subjected to a reliability test using Cronbach's alpha via SPSS 23. Table 1 below shows the reliability test result for each of the variables used in

this research.

**Table 1**

*Reliability Results*

Variables	No. of Items	$\alpha$ value	Interpretation
<b>Organizational Equity</b>			
Procedural Fairness	5	0.909	Excellent
Distributive Fairness	5	0.944	Excellent
Interactive Fairness	5	0.934	Excellent
Overall	15	0.929	Excellent
<b>Employee Productivity</b>			
Salaries and Incentives	5	0.875	Good
Systems and Procedures	5	0.933	Excellent
Group Dynamics	5	0.924	Excellent
Overall	15	0.910	Excellent
<b>Work life Balance</b>			
Work interference with Personal Life	5	0.946	Excellent
Personal Life Interference with Work	5	0.950	Excellent
Work/Personal Life Enhancement	5	0.918	Excellent
Overall	15	0.938	Excellent

Legend > 0.9 =Excellent; >0.8=Good; >0.7=Acceptable; >0.6=Questionable; >0.5=Poor; <0.5=Unacceptable

**Data Gathering Procedure** - The researcher of this study used the published thesis as a source for gathering and collecting data or information. In addition, books, articles, and journals that were found reliable for the study were also used, where relevant data and related information were collected. The researcher prepared a letter of request addressed to the Human Resource Manager of the university to acquire the approval to conduct the research work. It was reiterated that the purpose of the survey is for academic purposes only in writing this paper and that all gathered information will be kept confidential.

**Data Analysis** - Weighted mean and rank were used to describe organizational equity in terms of procedural, distributive and interactive fairness; to evaluate the employee's productivity with reference to salaries and incentives, systems and procedures and group dynamics; and to determine the respondent's work life balance in terms of Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL), Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW), and Work/Personal Life Enhancement (WPLE). The result of Shapiro-Wilk Test showed that p-values of all variables were less than 0.05 which means that the data set is not normally distributed. Therefore, Spearman rho was used to test the significant relationship as part of the non-parametric tests. All analyzes were performed using SPSS version 28.

**Ethical Considerations** - Ethical considerations were practiced in the conduct of the research work to warrant that every piece of information that was gathered is used for research purposes only to maintain the quality and integrity of the research. The researcher asked the consent of HR Manager for each university through letters and communication to make sure that the target respondents will be prepared to answer the necessary questions involved in the research. It also ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents by not seeking their names as they were answering the questionnaires. The researcher will also ensure that the respondents voluntarily answer the questionnaires according to their will. Lastly, it will also ensure that none of the respondents of the study will be hurt or harmed and that their safety and security are of top priority.

### 3. Result and discussion

Table 2 presents the summary table on organizational equity and as can be gleaned from the table it has a grand composite mean of 3.26, verbally interpreted as agreed. The agreement across all domains suggests a strong sense of organizational equity among respondents.

**Table 2**

*Summary Table on Organizational Equity*

Key Result Areas	Composite Mean	VI	Rank
Procedural Fairness	3.26	Agree	2
Distributive Fairness	3.24	Agree	3
Interactive Fairness	3.28	Agree	1
Grand Composite Mean	3.26	Agree	

Legend:3.50-4.00=Strongly Agree;2.50-3.49=Agree;1.50-2.49=Disagree;1.00-1.49=Strongly Disagree

This indicates that employees perceive decision-making processes as fair, rewards as just, and interactions with supervisors and colleagues as respectful and supportive. High levels of perceived fairness can contribute to a positive work environment characterized by trust, engagement, motivation, and reduced conflict. This can lead to improved employee well-being, productivity, and retention. Agreement across domains might indicate that the organization has implemented effective policies and practices that promote fairness across all dimensions. This includes transparent procedures, objective reward systems, and open communication channels. Justice in organizations is not a single concept but encompasses various dimensions, including distributive justice (fairness in outcomes), procedural justice (fairness in processes), and interactional justice (fairness in interpersonal treatment). The emphasis on interactional justice, which includes respectful treatment, consideration of employee rights, and open communication, has gained increasing importance in recent years. This aligns with the mentioned indicator, highlighting its potential significance in shaping fairness perceptions (Blau, 2016).

**Table 3**

*Summary Table on Employee's Productivity*

Key Result Areas	Composite Mean	VI	Rank
Salaries and Incentives	3.29	Agree	1.5
Systems and Procedures	3.32	Agree	3
Group Dynamics	3.29	Agree	1.5
Grand Composite Mean	3.30	Agree	

Legend:3.50-4.00=Strongly Agree;2.50-3.49=Agree;1.50-2.49=Disagree;1.00-1.49=Strongly Disagree

Salaries and Incentives, Systems and Procedures, and Group Dynamics, are all agreed upon by respondents as important factors in measuring employee productivity it suggests strong consensus and could have several research implications, this imply that the research instrument used to measure productivity gains validity by aligning with respondents perceived key drivers. This increases confidence in the accuracy and relevance of the findings. The consistent focus on these three domains across respondents improves the reliability of the research, meaning similar results are likely to be obtained if the study is repeated. Identifying these agreed-upon domains as primary influences on productivity allows researchers to design more targeted interventions aimed at improving performance in these areas. This can lead to more effective resource allocation and potentially greater impact. The consensus can inform the development of tailored interventions considering the specific needs and preferences of different employee groups within the organization.

The strong consensus within the studied group could potentially generalize to similar contexts, making the findings relevant to other organizations within the same industry or with similar employee demographics. However, it's important to acknowledge the limitations of generalizability and consider cultural, organizational, and individual differences when applying the findings to other settings. Overall, agreement on these domains as key productivity drivers holds significant research value. It strengthens the research itself, informs intervention strategies, and opens doors for further exploration of complex factors influencing employee performance. By delving deeper, researchers can gain a more nuanced understanding of how to create workplaces that truly foster optimal productivity and employee well-being.

Departments with higher agreement on the fairness and effectiveness of HR practices displayed better individual and team performance. This suggests that shared understanding and alignment regarding how employees are treated and developed contribute to a more productive environment Kinicki et. al (2017). Takeuchi et al.'s research provides valuable insights into the complex factors influencing work performance in

different cultural contexts. By understanding the unique relationships between leadership behaviors, perceived organizational support, and performance, organizations can develop more effective leadership approaches and cultivate supportive work environments to optimize employee engagement and productivity across diverse workforce.

**Table 4***Summary Table on Work Life Balance*

Key Result Areas	Composite Mean	VI	Rank
Work Interference with Personal Life	3.21	Agree	3
Personal Life Interference with Work	3.25	Agree	2
Work/Personal Life Enhancement	3.28	Agree	1
Grand Composite Mean	3.25	Agree	

Legend: 3.50-4.00=Strongly Agree; 2.50-3.49=Agree; 1.50-2.49=Disagree; 1.00-1.49=Strongly Disagree

Table 4, present the summary table on work life balance manifesting that the respondents agreed that work interference with personal life, personal life interference with work and wok/personal life enhancement are the domains that measure work life balance having a grand composite mean of 3.25 verbally interpreted as Agreed. High agreement across all measures suggests a significant imbalance in individuals' work and personal lives. Their personal lives disrupt work, work disrupts their personal lives, and work experiences don't positively spill over into their personal spheres, indicating a lack of overall work-life balance.

Agreement on all measures highlights the presence of both work-to-personal and personal-to-work conflict. This indicates a bidirectional struggle, where both work and personal demands intrude upon each other, creating constant challenges in managing both domains. Brough et al. (2017) conducted study which focuses on the negative consequences of work-family time conflict, similar to your work interference with personal life measure. High agreement on both interference measures could suggest respondents experience significant work-family conflict, potentially leading to reduced job satisfaction and negatively impacting both work and personal lives. High agreement on all measures could suggest respondents experience constant challenges managing the demands of both domains, leading to emotional exhaustion and impacting both work and personal well-being (Tenzer et al., 2016). Carlson et al. (2017) investigate the concept of work-life spillover, where demands from one domain negatively impact the other. High agreement on all measures could suggest respondents experience frequent work-life spillover in both directions, causing disruptions and hindering balance in both domains.

**Table 5***Relationship Between Organizational Equity and Employee's Productivity*

Variables	Rho	p-value	Interpretation
<b>Procedural Fairness</b>			
Salaries and Incentives	0.467**	0.000	Highly Significant
Systems and Procedures	0.437**	0.000	Highly Significant
Group Dynamics	0.467**	0.000	Highly Significant
<b>Distributive Fairness</b>			
Salaries and Incentives	0.419**	0.000	Highly Significant
Systems and Procedures	0.403**	0.000	Highly Significant
Group Dynamics	0.376**	0.000	Highly Significant
<b>Interactive Fairness</b>			
Salaries and Incentives	0.444**	0.000	Highly Significant
Systems and Procedures	0.399**	0.000	Highly Significant
Group Dynamics	0.403**	0.000	Highly Significant

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

As seen in the table, the computed rho-values ranging from 0.376 to 0.467 indicate a weak to moderate direct relationship among the sub variables of organizational equity and employee's productivity. There was a statistically significant relationship between organizational equity and employee's productivity because the obtained p-values were less than 0.01. Findings can encourage organizations to prioritize and invest in initiatives

that promote organizational equity in various aspects like pay, opportunities, and decision-making. This could involve implementing fairer compensation practices, diversifying leadership roles, and addressing bias in performance evaluation. Research can explore and develop evidence-based interventions and programs to improve organizational equity and measure their impact on employee productivity and other organizational outcome. Understanding the link between equity and productivity can guide HR professionals in building stronger relationships with employees by addressing concerns about unfairness and promoting a sense of justice within the organization.

Overall, the finding of a statistically significant relationship between organizational equity and employee productivity opens up numerous avenues for further research across various disciplines. By investigating the mechanisms underlying this relationship and its broader implications, researchers can contribute to creating more equitable workplaces that benefit both employees and organizations. The study **Korsmeyer, et. al., (2001)** found a positive relationship between procedural and distributive justice (aspects of organizational equity) and employee productivity, with trust in supervisor and organizational commitment moderating this relationship.

**Table 6**

*Relationship Between Organizational Equity and Work Life Balance*

Variables	Rho	p-value	Interpretation
<b>Procedural Fairness</b>			
Work Interference with Personal Life	0.414**	0.000	Highly Significant
Personal Life Interference with Work	0.376**	0.000	Highly Significant
Work/Personal Life Enhancement	0.401**	0.000	Highly Significant
<b>Distributive Fairness</b>			
Work Interference with Personal Life	0.427**	0.000	Highly Significant
Personal Life Interference with Work	0.364**	0.000	Highly Significant
Work/Personal Life Enhancement	0.447**	0.000	Highly Significant
<b>Interactive Fairness</b>			
Work Interference with Personal Life	0.452**	0.000	Highly Significant
Personal Life Interference with Work	0.376**	0.000	Highly Significant
Work/Personal Life Enhancement	0.436**	0.000	Highly Significant

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

As seen in the table, the computed rho-values ranging from 0.364 to 0.452 indicate a weak to moderate direct relationship among the sub variables of organizational equity and work life balance. There was a statistically significant relationship between organizational equity and work life balance because the obtained p-values were less than 0.01. Findings can encourage organizations to consider equity when designing and implementing work-life balance initiatives. This could involve ensuring equal access to flexible work arrangements, childcare benefits, or leave policies across different employee groups. Research can explore how workplace inequities related to gender, race, or other factors contribute to work-life imbalances and investigate interventions to address these biases. Understanding the link between equity and work-life balance can guide HR professionals in creating more inclusive workplaces that support employees' well-being and prevent burnout.

De Stefano, et. al., (2017) found a positive relationship between procedural justice (a dimension of organizational equity) and work-life balance, mediated by work engagement. Higher perceived fairness in decision-making processes led to employees feeling more engaged and having better work-life balance. Byron, et. al., (2016) investigated the relationship between distributive justice (another dimension of organizational equity) and work-life balance, considering workload control as a moderator and work engagement as a mediator. Results showed that when employees perceive fair rewards and compensation, they are more engaged and report better work-life balance, especially when they also have control over their workload.

**Table 7***Relationship Between Employee's Productivity and Work Life Balance*

Variables	Rho	p-value	Interpretation
<b>Salaries and Incentives</b>			
Work Interference with Personal Life	0.391**	0.000	Highly Significant
Personal Life Interference with Work	0.402**	0.000	Highly Significant
Work/Personal Life Enhancement	0.430**	0.000	Highly Significant
<b>Systems and Procedures</b>			
Work Interference with Personal Life	0.434**	0.000	Highly Significant
Personal Life Interference with Work	0.412**	0.000	Highly Significant
Work/Personal Life Enhancement	0.420**	0.000	Highly Significant
<b>Group Dynamics</b>			
Work Interference with Personal Life	0.350**	0.000	Highly Significant
Personal Life Interference with Work	0.369**	0.000	Highly Significant
Work/Personal Life Enhancement	0.401**	0.000	Highly Significant

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

As seen in the table, the computed rho-values ranging from 0.350 to 0.434 indicate a weak to moderate direct relationship among the sub variables of employee's productivity and work life balance. There was a statistically significant relationship between employee's productivity and work life balance because the obtained p-values were less than 0.01. Findings can encourage organizations to invest in programs and policies that promote work-life balance for employees. This could include flexible work arrangements, remote work options, generous leave policies, and employee assistance programs. Research can explore methodologies for effectively measuring and managing employee workload to ensure work-life balance. This could involve workload distribution strategies, collaboration tools, and communication protocols to prevent burnout. Organizations can leverage the link between work-life balance and productivity to improve employee communication and engagement. By demonstrating their commitment to employee well-being, they can foster trust and motivation, potentially leading to increased productivity.

Allen et al. (2017) examined the relationship between work-life balance and employee performance over a four-year period across different hierarchical levels. Results showed a positive association between work-life balance and performance, even when controlling for individual and organizational factors. Demerouti et al. (2015) in his review article discusses the concept of work engagement and its various correlates, including work-life balance. The authors highlight the bidirectional relationship between engagement and balance, where engagement can promote better work-life balance, and vice versa.

A strong positive relationship between organizational equity and employee engagement signifies that fair practices and procedures foster a high level of dedication and enthusiasm among employees. They feel valued and respected, leading to increased commitment and motivation. A high correlation between engagement and productivity implies that engaged employees are more productive, focusing their energy on achieving organizational goals. Their intrinsic motivation drives them to excel. A positive link between equity and work-life balance indicates that fair organizational practices contribute to a healthier balance between work and personal life. Employees feel less stressed and overwhelmed, leading to better overall well-being and potentially higher productivity.

The high relationships can form a positive cycle: Equity fosters engagement, leading to increased productivity. High productivity strengthens the perception of equity (e.g., rewards align with performance), further boosting engagement. Improved work-life balance due to fair practices enhances focus and reduces stress, contributing to continued productivity. With all indicators closely linked, the intended output of improved employee productivity becomes highly likely. Motivated and engaged employees put in more effort and achieve better results. Fair practices build trust and loyalty, encouraging employees to go the extra mile. A healthy work-life balance allows employees to recharge and return to work refreshed and energized, ready to contribute at their best. Overall, a framework showing high relationships among these variables paints a promising picture for increased employee productivity. It suggests a well-balanced system where fair practices, engaged employees,



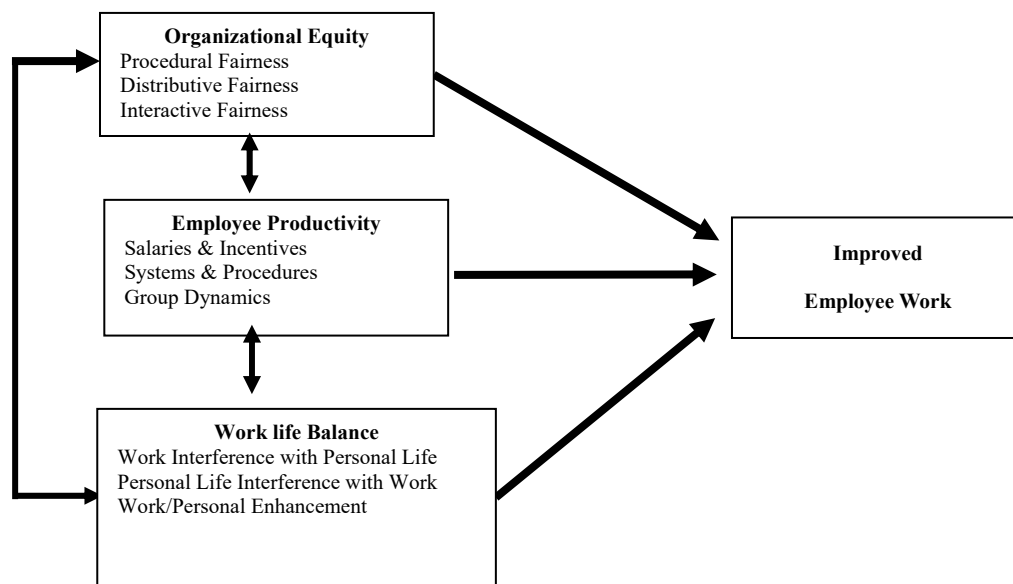


Figure 1. Framework for Improved Employee Engagement

#### 4. Conclusion and recommendation

The respondents moderately agreed on organizational equity in terms of procedural, distributive and interactive fairness. Respondents moderately agreed that salaries and incentives, system and procedures and group dynamics affect employee's productivity. It was moderately agreed by the respondents that work interference with personal life, personal life interference with work and work/personal life enhancement affect work life balance. There is a high positive relationship between organizational equity, employee's productivity and work life balance. Developed employee engagement framework. Direct Managers and Team Leaders may aim to provide some level of autonomy and control for employees, along with opportunities for feedback and skill development this empowers them to navigate challenging tasks and find meaning in their work. The HR manager may analyze workloads and implement better distribution or prioritization strategies that can help prevent employees from feeling overwhelmed and struggling to handle both work and personal demands. The proposed framework may be adopted by Huinan Normal University to improve employee engagement. Future researcher may conduct similar study focusing on the complex interplay between different dimensions of justice, the role of technology in shaping fairness perceptions, and the impact of justice on broader organizational outcomes like performance and well-being.

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