

Abstract

The importance of fair treatment in enhancing trust in authority has already been documented extensively in the literature in a variety of institutional contexts. It has also been shown that even young children are sensitive to the so-called procedural justice, and that the experiences of both justice and injustice shape wider attitudes of young people towards authorities. In four quantitative studies ($N = 1362$) I tried to verify this effect in an academic context. I found that fair treatment was a stronger predictor of the students' perceived legitimacy of university authorities than fair grades and decisions (i.e., distributive justice). I also checked how fair treatment correlates with the level of students' identification with their university, and whether trust in lecturers and academia translates into a higher level of students' academic engagement and lower level of academic burnout. I found that the positive experience of justice at the university enhances the higher sense of identification with the academic community of one's own university, which translates into greater trust in lecturers and academic authorities, which, in turn, translates into higher level of academic engagement and lower level of academic burnout.

Keywords: higher education, procedural fairness, legitimacy, identification with the academic community, academic engagement, and burnout