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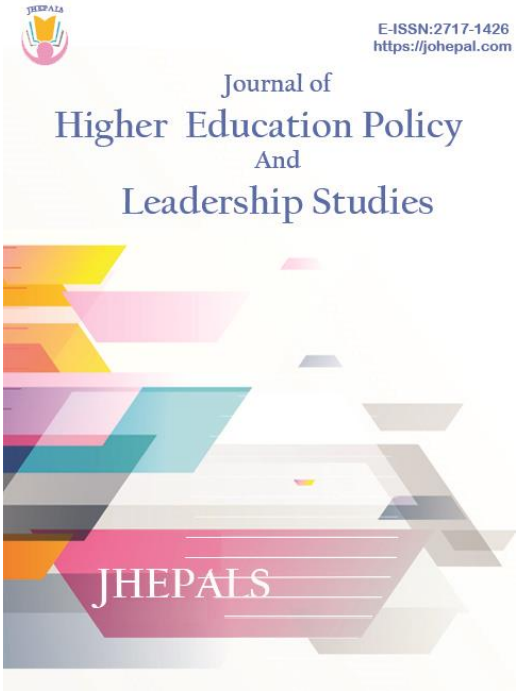

Special Issue:

Classroom Justice in Non-Western Higher Education Institutes

Prof. Masoomeh Estaji [1]
Department of English Language and Literature, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, IRAN
Email: estaji@atu.ac.ir
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8014-9491

Prof. Rebecca M. Chory [2]
Department of Management, Frostburg State University, Frostburg, MD, USA
Email: rmchory@frostburg.edu
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9692-1749

Dr. Kiyana Zhaleh [3]
Department of General Education Courses, Gorgan University of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, Gorgan, IRAN
Email: zhaleh@gau.ac.ir
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0918-5246

Special Issue Co-Editors

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Classroom justice is defined as perceptions of fairness in the instructional context (Chory, 2007; Chory-Assad, 2002). It is usually conceptualized and examined as having three dimensions or types: distributive, procedural, and interactional. When students believe their instructors and their classroom outcomes and processes are fair, i.e., when they perceive high levels of classroom justice, they learn more, are more motivated, more satisfied with their educational experience, and have more positive student-instructor relationships. On the other hand, classroom injustice is associated with outcomes that threaten learning and the instructional environment, such as student aggression, hostility, resistance, deception, and coming to class under the influence of drugs and alcohol (Chory, 2023; Estaji et al., 2026; Horan et al., 2010).

Though the knowledge gained from the substantial body of empirical classroom justice research is significant and valuable, it has primarily been produced through theories grounded in Western perspectives and from research samples of students from Western countries (namely, the USA, Germany, and Italy; Estaji et al., 2026). Many questions remain about the applicability of classroom justice theory, principles, practices, and research to non-Western higher educational contexts. This special issue, "Classroom Justice in Non-Western Higher Education Institutes," begins to address many of these issues.

This special issue features four Articles, a Reflection, a Colloquium, an Interview, and a Book Review. The scholarly work featured in this issue represents the collaboration of a diverse group of individuals from a variety of disciplines, academic positions, and countries, all brought together by their interest in classroom justice in higher education. We provide a brief description of each of these contributions below.

The first article, "*Perceived Teacher Fairness as a Predictor of Students' Well-being in Higher Education: The Mediating Role of Cognitive Emotion Regulation*" by Hamed Zandi, examined Iranian undergraduate and graduate students' cognitive emotion regulation as a theoretical link between instructor fairness and students' subjective well-being in the form of life satisfaction and mood level. Results indicated that perceptions of instructor fairness

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predicted greater student subjective well-being, largely through its positive effect on the positive reappraisal strategy, and to a lesser extent, its negative effect on catastrophizing. The author recommends instructors be trained in classroom justice and students be taught adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies, such as positive reappraisal, to increase their resilience in the face of challenges.

The second article is co-authored by Rahul V. Karad, Emma E. de Wit, and Joske G. F. Bunders-Aelen. It is entitled "*Interactional Classroom Justice in Indian Higher Education: Understanding its Role in the Process of Moving Away from Rote-based Pedagogy through Transdisciplinary and Transformative Learning*". In this qualitative research study, the authors describe an experimental university course in which interactional justice acted as the mechanism to shift instruction from rote memorization and top-down teaching to inquiry-based, interactive learning. Results showed that students felt respected and safe to take on novel roles as co-creators of knowledge due to the interactional classroom justice they experienced. In addition, the authors suggested that classroom interactional justice be extended to include the notion of sharing epistemic authority and responsibility with students.

The third article, "*Exploring Moroccan Students' Perceptions of Classroom Justice and Satisfaction in Higher Education*" is co-authored by El Hassane Ait Ali and Samira Essabari. This cross-sectional survey study of Moroccan university students revealed an unexpected finding: Student perceptions of procedural justice negatively predicted student satisfaction. The authors suggested that the centralized, bureaucratic, and rigid nature of Moroccan higher education may explain this relationship, and they recommended future qualitative research on the topic. In addition, results indicated that interactional justice positively predicted student satisfaction with twice the strength as procedural justice. The authors close with a discussion of the educational policy and leadership implications of their work.

Seyyed Mohammad Reza Adel, Sajjad Zahedi Moghaddam, Ali Mavaddat Kakhki, and Mahla Ghelichi co-authored the fourth article, "*Exploring Social Justice Experiences Among Iranian EFL Learners: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study*". They conducted semi-structured phenomenological interviews with 13 Iranian university English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners about their experiences with unfairness, discrimination, and exclusion in their EFL education. Three themes captured the students' experiences: structural barriers, teacher practices, and suppression of voice. The authors note the cultural norms around respect for authority and refrainment from dissent, as well as fear of academic or political consequences for self-advocacy, as unique challenges encountered by Iranian students seeking social justice in their education. Based on their results, they recommend instructor training centered on equity, curriculum revisions that acknowledge student autonomy, and institutional support and oversight of these measures.

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Ashish Hulle and Ravikumar Purohit are the authors of the Reflection, "*Ensuring Procedural and Interactional Classroom Justice in Non-Western Higher Education Assessment Practices*". They conducted a mixed methods study (online questionnaire and focus groups) of undergraduates in an Engineering college in India. Survey results indicated that student perceptions of interactional justice were over twice as strong a predictor of trust in instructors as procedural justice perceptions were. Thematic analysis of the focus groups yielded three themes: procedural justice shortfalls, interactional justice strengths, and compensatory dynamics triggered by procedural or organizational flaws. Based on their findings, the researchers recommend professors communicate clear grading guidelines to students and respectfully explain grades. They also encourage instructor training in fair grading practices and student involvement in policy creation. The authors emphasize the importance of instructors' cultural understanding, so that, for example, in cultures in which respect for authority is expected, such as in India, students may be made to feel comfortable asking about their grades.

In the colloquium "*Classroom Justice in Higher Education: A Bibliometric Analysis of 1990-2025*" Zahra Baitalebi summarizes research published from 1990 to 2025 on justice in higher education. Using the Web of Science database, the author identified influential authors and journals, as well as patterns of collaboration and keyword groupings, among other elements. The results showed a shift from organizational-based justice frameworks to critical perspectives (e.g., social justice, identity) over the years. Procedural justice was the justice dimension that received the most research attention. Scholars from the USA were the most prolific classroom justice researchers, and classroom justice research primarily appeared in Education journals.

The interview "*Classroom Justice in Non-Western Higher Education Institutes*" with Sean M. Horan explores his impressive record of classroom justice scholarship. He describes how his program of research on classroom justice originated and evolved, and the role played by his students, colleagues, and former professors in his research journey on the topic. Dr. Horan also offers insights into how to approach classroom justice research and practice in non-Western educational contexts.

Mohammad Reza Montazeri provides a Book Review of the "*Handbook of Social Justice Theory and Research*" by Clara Sabbagh and Manfred Schmitt (Eds.). The edited volume is organized into five parts, each containing five chapters, plus an introductory chapter. In the Introduction, Sabbagh and Schmitt present the historical origins of justice scholarship and discuss how justice has been studied from various philosophical perspectives. Part I considers justice from different disciplinary perspectives (e.g., psychology, economics). Part II covers perceptions and responses to (in)justice (e.g., justice sensitivity, coping strategies). Part III focuses on four forms of justice, including distributive and procedural justice. Part IV examines how justice functions in various domains (e.g., education, workplace), and Part V details how justice is entwined in historical events (e.g., civil rights activism). The book's

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target audience includes researchers, graduate (and upper undergraduate) students, and instructors in the social sciences. As such, it is comprehensive, and at times, complex; however, it reads smoothly as it explores the philosophical, theoretical, historical, empirical, and applied research and perspectives on justice.

In conclusion, the contributions to this special issue support the importance of justice in non-Western higher education. Furthermore, this scholarship reveals several similarities, along with some differences, in how classroom justice functions in non-Western and Western contexts.

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