
Equity in Action: Leveraging Diversity and Leader – Member Dynamics for Organization Justice

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Stephen Deepak¹, Syed Khalid Perwez²

Abstract:

Purpose: This study hypothesizes that diversity management positively influences perceptions of organizational justice, while Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) positively impacts both diversity management and organizational justice. Furthermore, it posits that LMX effectively mediates the relationship between diversity management and organizational justice.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Drawing from diverse literature on diversity, justice, and LMX, this study underscores the significance of leaders in fostering a climate of diversity management and organizational justice within work units, thereby enhancing organizational effectiveness.

Findings: Research indicates that leaders and supervisors play a pivotal role in shaping organizational justice perceptions, particularly concerning distributive and procedural outcomes. Leaders influence these aspects through their opinions, feedback, and involvement in decision-making processes. Moreover, in work units, leaders not only manage diversity but also promote justice through high-quality Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) interactions.

Practical Implications: To effectively navigate this diverse workforce and ensure organizational success, it is imperative for organizations to establish a climate of diversity management rooted in clear principles and practices. Central to the notion of organizational success is the concept of organizational justice, wherein any deviation from promised standards, rules, or principles, whether by leaders or the organization itself, is perceived as unfair and unjust.

Originality/Value: This study delves into the intersection of diversity management and organizational justice, seeking to understand how the former can foster the latter.

Keywords: Diversity Management, Organization Justice, Leader Member Exchange.

JEL codes: J71, M12, D63, M14.

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¹Prof., Research Scholar, Vellore Institute of Technology - Deemed to be University, Vellore & Assistant Professor, Kristu Jayanti College, Autonomous, Indonesia, e-mail: stephendepak@kristujayanti.com;

²Prof., and Research Guide Vellore Institute of Technology - Deemed to be University, Vellore, Indonesia, e-mail: khalid@vit.ac.in;

1. Introduction

The new Millennium is presenting itself with new challenges for the world at large and for businesses in particular. Globalization primarily is the convergence of Social, Cultural, Economic and thought processes leading to a world truly called a Global Village. This transformation has resulted in movement of Capital, Goods and Services and Human resources from across the world. These vicissitudes have resulted in close integrations in Political, Socio-cultural and Economic actions at an International level (Turek 2004; Urbsiené 2011).

The phenomenon of workforce diversity has become increasingly prominent in the wake of globalization. With the globalization wave, organizations have been confronted with a diverse pool of talent sourced from various corners of the globe, primarily reflected in their demographic makeup.

Global demographic trends reveal an aging workforce in the Western world, a rising number of women entering the workforce, and an expanding array of racial and ethnic groups engaging in employment across different regions (Bedrnová and Novy, 2007). Consequently, diversity has become a subject of intensified research, as organizations seek to navigate and leverage this diversity to gain a competitive edge.

However, the critical question remains: are organizations adequately prepared and equipped to effectively manage diversity? As global firms increasingly recruit employees from diverse nationalities, cultures, ethnicities, languages, and other diverse backgrounds, their ability to address diversity issues sensitively and equitably becomes paramount. Failure to do so may hinder their ability to capitalize on the opportunities presented by diversity. Given that diversity lies beyond the direct control of organizations, mastering the art of managing diverse workgroups becomes imperative for long-term sustainability (Girish, 2015).

Research indicates a strong positive relationship between organizational justice and various work-related attitudes and outcomes, including job satisfaction, job performance, and organizational commitment (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Colquitt *et al.*, 2001; Greenberg, 1990). The manner in which firms manage their diverse workforce significantly influences employees' attitudes and subsequent work behaviors (Ambrose, Hess, and Ganesan, 2007; Cropanzano and Rupp, 2003).

When employees perceive fairness and equity in their treatment by the organization, they tend to develop trust in both their supervisors and the organization itself (Colquitt *et al.*, 2006; Lind and Van den Bos, 2002). Conversely, perceptions of injustice may lead to feelings of betrayal and provoke retaliatory or counterproductive behaviors among employees (Foley, Hang-Yue, and Wong, 2005; Skarlicki and Folger, 1997), ultimately contributing to conflicts within the organization (Gutek, Cohen, and Tsui, 1996).

Leader-Member Exchanges (LMX) within organizations wield significant influence over group dynamics and outcomes, given that teams serve as microcosms of the larger organizational structure, with numerous decentralized teams operating throughout the firm. Within LMX, the leader's role is paramount, as the relationships established between superiors and subordinates, facilitated through delegation frameworks, shape every aspect of processes, decisions, and outcomes.

The quality of the leader's rapport with team members holds critical importance within the organization, as it enables the leader to positively guide members towards achieving collective goals and objectives. This relationship has been shown to impact various facets of organizational functioning, including job satisfaction (Vecchio and Gobdel, 1984), commitment (Duchon *et al.*, 1986), job performance ratings (Graen *et al.*, 1982), and frequency of promotions received (Wakabayashi *et al.*, 1988).

Furthermore, the leader serves as a pivotal role model capable of instilling proper practices, implementing fair processes, and making equitable decisions. In this capacity, the leader has the opportunity to demonstrate fairness in their actions, guided by personal ethics, integrity, and noble intentions. It is proposed that when leaders operate with fairness towards their teams, they are better equipped to manage diversity effectively and foster positive perceptions of organizational justice, ultimately leading to enhanced and superior outcomes for the organization.

2. Diversity Management

In today's organizational landscape, diversity within the workforce is an inevitable reality. Defined as the "mixture of people with different group identities within the same social system" (Nkomo and Cox, 1996), workforce diversity encompasses a broad spectrum of individual differences, including culture, ethnicity, nationality, age, religion, disability, gender, education, and beliefs (Edwin, 2001, p.26).

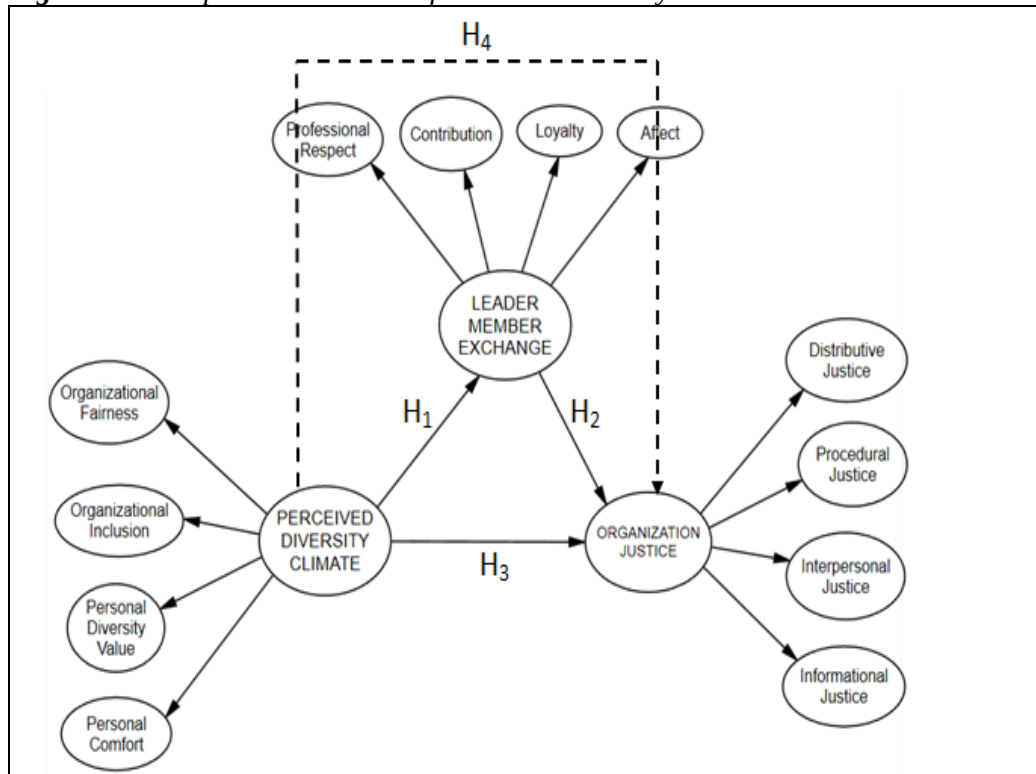
As organizations embrace diversity, they encounter variations in worldviews and subjective cultures among their workforce, leading to behavioral differences across cultural groups and distinct identities within the organization (Larkey, 1996). The formation of a common identity within groups stems from individuals within a particular culture learning and sharing common sets of symbols, norms, and value systems.

This shared understanding fosters cohesion and unity within the group. To effectively navigate these dynamics, organizations must comprehend the cultural backgrounds of their employees to decipher individual and group behaviors. The diversity inherent in the workforce, both externally and internally, contributes to the creation of a heterogeneous diversity climate within the organization (Hyde and Hopkins, 2004).

3. Research Questions

- Do Diversity Management principles and practices enable in the creation of Organization Justice?
- What role can Leader Member Exchange have on Diversity Management and Organizational Justice?
- Can the LMX positively mediate Diversity Management and create Organizational Justice environment?

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Research Study



Source: Own study.

4. Research Methodology

The study is based review of research articles on Diversity Climate and Management, Organization Justice and Leader Member Exchange (LMX) relationships. The articles were reviewed with the central idea to find support for the conceptual model.

Hypothesis 1: Diversity Management can positively influence Organization Justice perceptions in the Organization:

The concept of diversity climate encompasses both psychological and behavioral dimensions, reflecting employees' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about organizational diversity matters. Behavioral climate pertains to the interactions among various ethnic and racial groups within a given context (Hurtado *et al.*, 1999), providing insights into the organization's overall stance on diversity. A positive diversity climate fosters intolerance towards workplace harassment and discrimination, promoting fairness, support, and concern within the organization. Conversely, a negative diversity climate may inadvertently condone such behaviors, signaling bias or conformity to specific groups or communities (Chin, 2009), leading to perceptions of organizational indifference and injustice among members.

Diversity management aims to effectively understand and navigate the differences among employees to maximize organizational effectiveness (Mykletun, 2007). This requires a human resource strategy that leverages individual and group dimensions of diversity management to cultivate a culture of inclusivity and belonging.

Cultivating cultural awareness, promoting culture neutrality, and managing conflicts and priorities within diverse groups are crucial aspects of diversity management at both the individual and group levels. Additionally, at the institutional or organizational level, legitimizing resources, addressing potential clashes, and understanding organizational dynamics contribute to fostering a perception of fair treatment among employees (Guilherme, Keating, and Hoppe).

The implementation of diversity management strategies has yielded numerous positive outcomes, including increased creativity, higher organizational commitment, cost savings in hiring and retention, reduced turnover rates, enhanced job involvement and satisfaction, greater organizational citizenship behavior, and decreased turnover intentions (Fink *et al.*, 2001; 2003; Harter *et al.*, 2002; Allen *et al.*, 2008; Muchiri and Ayoko, 2012; Singh and Selvarajan, 2013).

Hypothesis 2: LMX relationship can positively influence Diversity Management in the Organization:

The relationship between a leader and their team members holds paramount importance within any organization, as it serves as a conduit for positively influencing members toward shared goals and objectives through leader-member dyads. The quality of this exchange varies among different subordinates within the workgroup (Dansereau *et al.*, 1975), impacting crucial aspects such as job satisfaction (Vecchio and Gobdel, 1984), commitment (Duchon *et al.*, 1986), job performance ratings (Graen *et al.*, 1982), and frequency of promotions received (Wakabayashi *et al.*, 1988).

Research has explored various factors influencing leader-member exchanges, including the time spent together (Harrison, Price, and Bell, 1998; Pelled, Eisenhardt, and Xin, 1999), task type (Jehn, Northcraft, and Neale, 1999), and interdependence in task performance (Harrison, Price, Gavin, and Florey, 2002; Jehn *et al.*, 1999). Positive LMX relationships among coworkers foster good relations and a sense of belongingness, facilitated by supportive managerial efforts to create a conducive environment (Sherony and Green, 2009). Conversely, LMX variability has been linked to negative impacts on job satisfaction and well-being (Hooper and Martin, 2008).

The role of the leader significantly influences team dynamics and outcomes, with leaders serving as role models who positively shape team culture and inclusion (Zaccaro, Rittman, and Marks, 2001). Managing diversity requires leaders to adopt different approaches and leadership styles to effectively engage diverse groups and foster inclusive environments (Ayman and Korabik, 2010; Cheung and Halpern, 2010; Chin, 2010; Sanchez-Hucles and Davis, 2010). Thus, leaders play a pivotal role in grooming team members and effectively managing diversity within the organization through LMX relationships and their leadership approach.

Hypothesis 3: LMX relationship can positively influence Organization Justice in the Organization:

"Justice serves as the glue that binds individuals together, while injustice drives them apart" (Folger and Cropanzano, 1998). Ethical and fair treatment is a fundamental expectation of employees within organizations (Cropanzano, 1993). Extensive research on organizational justice sheds light on its impact on employee attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes (Ambrose, Hess, and Ganesan, 2007; Cropanzo and Rupp, 2003; Greenberg, 1990), serving as a lens through which fairness within the organization is understood (Hasan Ali Al-Zu'bi, 2010).

Employees seek to ascertain whether they have been treated fairly and whether organizational rewards align with perceived fairness (Moorman, 1991). The positive relationship between organizational justice and various work-related factors, such as work attitudes, job performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, has been well-established in research (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Colquitt, 2001; Greenberg, 1990).

Trust between employers and employees is nurtured by perceptions of organizational justice, leading to lower employee turnover rates and increased organizational citizenship behaviors (Colquitt *et al.*, 2006; Lind and Van den Bos, 2002; Daly and Geyer, 1994; Masterson, 2001). Organizational justice comprises four distinct dimensions—distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational—providing a framework for labeling fairness or unfairness and facilitating the redressal of unjust issues.

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) reflects the quality of interaction between employees and their supervisors (Dienesch and Liden, 1986), influencing trust levels, support, and rewards within the organization (Dienesch and Liden, 1986). High-quality LMX exchanges foster trust and faith in leaders, enabling effective decision-making and implementation of processes and procedures (Dunegan *et al.*, 1992; Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). LMX relationships significantly influence interactional justice, as supervisors play a pivotal role in this form of justice (Masterson *et al.*, 2000).

Additionally, LMX is associated with a positive organizational climate and procedural justice (Kozolowski and Doherty, 1989; Baron and Kenny, 1986). There is a growing interest among organizational justice researchers in exploring the relationship between LMX and justice, and how leaders within LMX units shape justice environments (Scandura, 1999; Pillai *et al.*, 1999). This emphasizes the crucial role of leaders in fostering fairness and justice within organizations through their interactions with employees.

Hypothesis 4: LMX relationship can effectively mediate Diversity Management influencing Organization Justice:

Organization justice encompasses the concept of fairness or unfairness in the procedures, outcomes, and interactions within an organization or among its members. People naturally pay close attention to how they are treated in various situations and events to gauge the fairness of their treatment (Tabibnia, Satpute, and Lieberman, 2008). While justice and fair treatment may be more straightforward within homogeneous groups due to shared commonalities, the same may not hold true for diverse workgroups.

Today, organizations are increasingly recognizing the importance of addressing diversity issues effectively, particularly as they contend with diverse workforces (DiTomaso *et al.*, 2007; Linnehan and Konrad, 1999). Perceptions of fairness can either foster inclusion or exclusion within organizations (Bies and Moag, 1986; Cropanzano and Byrne, 2001; Cropanzano *et al.*, 2001; Tyler, 1999).

Failure to address injustice fairly can lead to anxiety, isolation, a loss of belongingness, and withdrawal behaviors among members (Krehbiel and Cropanzano, 2000; Koper *et al.*, 1993; Lind and Tyler, 1988; Tyler and Smith, 1998; Weiss *et al.*, 1999). Moreover, minority groups unjustly treated may experience marginalization and discrimination within the workplace (Wooten and James, 2004).

Applying organizational justice through a diversity management policy can promote positivity among employees. Research suggests that involving diversity stakeholders in decision-making processes related to diversity events can help reduce unfairness and injustice (Yuka Fujimoto, Charmine, E.J., Härtel, Fara Azmat, 2013). This approach proposes a justice-based decision-making framework for managing

diversity, enabling organizations to effectively utilize diverse knowledge, skills, and talents (Cox, 2002; Gilbert and Ivancevich, 2000; Guillory, 2002; Thomas, 2001; Thomas and Ely, 2001).

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) entails continuous interaction between a leader and their subordinates. The quality of this relationship may manifest in subordinates' responses to the leader, with some exhibiting high-quality relationships while others exhibit low-quality relationships.

A leader who establishes a strong rapport with subordinates may experience increased acceptance, job latitude for subordinates, support in decision-making, open communication, trust, and loyalty among members (Scandura et.al, 1986) (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). LMX has been observed to effectively moderate diversity, as evidenced by the outcomes observed among diverse group members.

5. Conclusion

Globalization has ushered in numerous challenges, transforming the world into a globally interconnected village. Amidst the plethora of opportunities, the global economic landscape has undergone significant changes, rendering organizations more intricate than ever. One consequence of these shifts is workforce diversity. The presence of a diverse workforce within organizations has fostered a climate of diversity, where individuals bring their unique knowledge, skills, and talents to the forefront.

However, managing these differences poses one of the greatest challenges for managers and leaders. They must navigate issues such as self-reference criteria, ego clashes, cultural dominance, politicking, and pressure tactics among members of diverse cultural backgrounds. Effective diversity management requires principles and practices capable of addressing issues, events, procedures, and work-related decisions in an inclusive manner, guided by established guidelines.

Often, problems arising within diverse workgroups stem from perceived injustices in the distribution of outcomes such as pay, promotions, incentives, and rewards. This can lead to distributive injustice when outcomes do not align with established procedures, procedural injustice. Additionally, interpersonal injustice may arise if subordinates perceive bias or favoritism from superiors, and informational injustice may occur if relevant information is not shared transparently.

Studies, such as the one conducted by Olkkonen and Lipponen (2006), reveal that perceptions of justice are strongly linked to organizational and work-unit identification. Subordinates tend to perceive distributive and procedural justice as organization-focused, while interpersonal and informational justice are perceived as supervisor-focused. Managers and leaders wield influence over distributive and procedural outcomes, as decisions are often made collaboratively.

Hence, the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory becomes pertinent, with leaders influencing outcomes for members in diverse workgroups. Positive LMX relationships can foster a conducive climate for interpersonal and informational justice.

This article explores the mediating effect of LMX on diversity management practices, aiming to cultivate a climate of organizational justice. Grounded in delegation theory, it posits that well-trained and empowered superiors can play a pivotal role in implementing diversity management practices effectively.

LMX studies have shown positive effects on job satisfaction, commitment, job performance ratings, promotions, and task-related factors, highlighting the significance of leader-member relationships in fostering organizational justice. By integrating elements of diversity and organizational justice, leaders can cultivate a sense of belongingness and create conducive environments, ultimately fostering greater organizational commitment and performance.

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