AN ASSESSMENT OF ORGANISATIONAL JUSTICE PERCEPTIONS ACROSS THREE GENERATIONAL COHORTS

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Abstract

Despite several reviews of generational differences across cohorts regarding their career stages in organisations, relatively few empirical investigations have been conducted to understand these cohorts's behaviour and perceptions. Hence there is paucity of studies that explored the generational differences on the construct organisational justice across generational cohorts. The objective of this study was to assess the differences across three generational cohorts (Millennials, Generation X, and Baby Boomers) on dimensions of the organisational justice construct using the Organisational Justice Measurement Instrument (OJMI). Data was collected through the administration of OJMI to a random sample size of organisational employees (n=289). Descriptive statistics and analysis of variance were conducted to interpret the data. These findings provide evidence that differences do exist across cohorts on dimensions of organisational justice, and some differences may be a result of respondents' different perception of their organisation's practices and processes. In terms of contributions and practical implications, insight gained from the findings may be used in proposing organisational development interventions to manage multigenerational employees as well as to conduct future research.

Key Words: Organisational Justice, Public Service, Injustice, Generational Cohorts

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1. Introduction

Research on organisational justice proposes that justice has an impact on performance related factors in organisations. Literature indicates that organisational justice perceptions lead to employee commitment and trust (Colquitt, 2001). It is also argued that justice improves employees' job performance in an organisation (Cropanzano, Prehar & Chen, 2002). This improved performance occurs because employees who perceive just and fair practices in their organisation are inclined to want to perform better as a form of reciprocity (Gaudet, Tremblay & Doucet, 2014). Organisational justice affects what employees believe about the organisation as a whole because when the internal processes are perceived as just, employees are inclined to show greater loyalty and are more willingness to behave in the organisation's best interests (Cropanzano, Bowen & Gilliland 2007; Cropanzano *et al,* 2002). Just treatments of employees also lead to organisational citizenship behaviours that "spill over" to customers (Bowen, Gilliland & Folger 1999). In other words, organisational justice has a positive impact on employees' organisational citizenship behaviour, loyalty and customer satisfaction.

Generational cohorts reportedly hold different perceptions of each other; these perceptions can result in conflict and misunderstandings in the workplace. Generational cohorts in the workforce, such as Millennials, Generation X and Baby Boomers differ from each other in ways that are important for managers (Macky, Gardner & Forsyth, 2008). The reason that the generational cohorts differ from another in ways that matter to managers is because the differences between generations are theorised to derive from major influences in the environment within which early human socialisation occurs. These influences have an impact on the development of personality, values, beliefs and expectations that, once formed, are stable into adulthood (Macky *et al*, 2008). In South Africa, there is paucity of studies assessing differences in organisational justice perceptions across generational cohorts. Studies locally on organisational justice focussed only on its relationship with employment equity (Esterhuizen, 2008); disciplinary procedures (Van der Bank, Engelbrecht & Stumpher, 2010) and organisational attractiveness (Pilvinyte, 2013).

Hence, there is limited research that could be found regarding organisational justice and generational cohorts within the context of the South African public service. This study seeks to assess the differences across three generational cohorts (Millennials, Generation X and Baby Boomers) on dimensions of the organisational justice construct in a

South African public service organisation, namely government department.

2. Literature review

The following literature review firstly focuses on the definition of organisational justice and its dimensions. In addition, the different types of generational cohorts that are found in the workplace are identified and discussed.

2.1 The construct organisational justice

The construct organisational justice was introduced to describe an employee's perception of their organisation's behaviours, decisions and actions and how these influence the employees' own attitudes and behaviours at work (Greenberg, 1987). In other words, organisational justice is a personal evaluation of the ethical behaviour of all organisational members (Van der Bank *et al*, 2010). This definition of organisational justice is a descriptive approach which seeks to understand why employees view certain events as just and fair, as well as the consequences that follow from these evaluations (Cropanzano *et al*, 2007; Cropanzano *et al*, 2002). Hence, justice within the organisation is viewed as a subjective and descriptive concept because it captures what the individual employees believe to be right, rather than an objective reality or a prescriptive moral code.

In contrast to the positive influence of organisational justice on employee attitudes and behaviour, an injustice within an organisation is perceived as a corrosive solvent that can dissolve bonds within the organisation; hence unfair practices within the organisation are hurtful to employees and harmful to the organisation itself (Cropanzano *et al*, 2007; Cropanzano *et al*, 2002). It is argued that the results of unfair treatment by employees may include emotions of anger and resentment, lower production quantity and quality, greater absenteeism, greater turnover, less initiative, lower morale, lack of cooperation, spread of dissatisfaction to co-workers, fewer suggestions and less self-confidence (Van der Bank *et al*, 2010). It is therefore, essential that organisations are able to identify and address factors within the organisation that are likely to engender their employees' positive perception of organisational justice.

2.2 Dimensions of organisational justice

The four types or dimensions of organisational justice are namely, procedural justice, distributive justice, interpersonal justice and informational justice (Colquitt, 2001).

Distributive justice is the first fairness construct studied that focuses on the perceptions of fairness in the distribution and allocation of outcomes (Pilvinyte, 2013). It focuses on the organisational reality that not all employees are treated alike, and that the allocation of outcomes is differentiated in the organisation (Cropanzano *et al,* 2007; Cropanzano *et al*, 2002). Secondly, *procedural justice* refers to the means by which outcomes are allocated, but not specifically to the outcomes (Cropanzano *et al,* 2007; Cropanzano *et al,* 2002). It relates to the fairness of the formal procedures required by the organisation and its policy on the method of decision-making (Colquitt, 2001; Moorman, 1991). Thirdly, *interactional justice* refers to the perceived fairness of the interpersonal treatment used within the organisation to determine outcomes (Colquitt, 2001). It focuses on the sensitivity, politeness and respect employees receive from their superiors during procedures. This serves primarily to alter reactions to outcomes, because sensitivity can make people feel better even if the outcome is unfavourable (Pilvinyte, 2013). Lastly, *informational justice* is described as to whether one is truthful and provides adequate justifications for their actions and decisions in the organisation (Cropanzano *et al*, 2007; Cropanzano *et al*, 2002). It refers to the explanation, justification or information provided by decision-makers as to why outcomes were distributed in a certain way (Pilvinyte, 2013; Park & Gursoy, 2012). This type of justice requires that the information should be comprehensive, reasonable, truthful, timely and candid in nature.

In addition to the four dimensions, there are five dimensions that explain organisational justice namely, ethical leadership and management, strategic direction justice, service delivery innovation, customer relations and diversity management justice (Bakker & Demerouti 2007; Cropanzano, Rupp, Mohler & Schminke 2001). Organisational justice is a positive perception of the ethical and moral standing of the organisation's leadership and managerial conduct or practices (Cropanzano *et al,* 2007; Cropanzano *et al,* 2002). *Ethical leadership and management* as an aspect of justice implies that the leader and manager possess and promote justice values in the organisation such as honesty, integrity, openness, compassion, humanity, equality, trust, recognition and empowerment (Cropanzano *et al*, 2001; Werner, 2005). Creating a justice-oriented *strategic direction* for the organisation is one of the ways in which the organisation is able to indicate its concern for fair development and ethical execution of its purpose. Fair development of the strategic direction focuses on consultation with the relevant stakeholders during the decision-making process, which includes employees, managers, clients, customers and labour organisation (Cropanzano *et al*, 2001; Cropanzano *et al*, 2002). *Service delivery and innovation* as a dimension of justice highlights the responsibility of employers and employees in ensuring that they create a just and fair image of the organisation with regard to the development and delivery of services or products (Cropanzano *et al*, 2001). Regardless of how the service organisation

defines their service and how customers or clients perceive the service; a delivered service should function seamlessly in order for customers to perceive it correctly (fair and just) (Goldstein, Johnston, Duffy & Rao, 2002). *Customer relation justice* is basically concerned with maintaining positive relationships with customers, increasing customer loyalty, and expanding customer lifetime value (Cropanzano *et al*, 2001; King & Burgess, 2008). Therefore, customer relations practices in the organisation that are fair and just can help organisations manage customer interactions more effectively. An organisation that is devoted to *diversity management justice* is able to give the impression that the organisation has established systems which fairly evaluate, promote, and compensate its employees based upon performance and ability rather than on criteria such as gender, race, nationality, or age (Magoshi & Chang, 2009; Park & Gursoy, 2012) .

The above nine dimensions of organisational justice are essential in understanding and measuring the construct in this study.

2.3 Generational cohorts

Today's workforce presents unique leadership challenges as employees, managers and leaders in public service organisations are from different generations representing unique attitudes, beliefs, work habits, and experiences; as they work together on operational teams. Although the different generations in the workforce can present leadership challenges, the diversity of the different age groups can also add richness and strength to the organisation if all employees are valued for their contributions. According to Kupperschmidt (2000, p 66), the construct generational cohort refers to an "identifiable group that shares birth years, age location, and significant life events at critical developmental stages". Generational cohorts are defined as groups of people who share birth years, history, and a collective personality as a result of their defining experiences (Park & Gursoy, 2012; Zemke, Raines & Filipczak, 2000).

Literature indicates that within the work context there are three generational cohorts that have been identified, which are Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Millennials (Meriac, Woehr & Banister 2010; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Twenge, 2010).

Baby Boomers as the first generational cohort; they were born between 1946 and 1964. In terms of their childhood development, they were raised in the economic prosperity of the post-World War II, and lived through the most dramatic changes in history. Baby Boomers in an organisational context are considered to be loyal, committed, goal oriented, driven by rewards and they value work more than the younger generations because they see work as being more central to their lives (Smola & Sutton, 2002). They are described as the most egocentric generation;

they have spent their lives rewriting the rules (Zemke *et al*, 2000).

Generation Xers are the second generational cohort that was born between 1965 and 1980. In an organisational context they are currently dominant in the workforce as Baby Boomers are approaching retirement phase in their career. According to Twenge (2010) Generation Xers differ from the first generational cohort, because in organisations they are considered to be independent and individualistic, placing more value on work-life balance, increased pay, material possessions and their own careers over being loyal to their organisations. This generational cohort has the privilege that technology underwent major advances during their formative years and has become an important part of their lives (Karper, Fuller & Sirias, 2002).

Millennials or Generation Y are the third generational cohort that was born between 1981 and 1999. They are the youngest generation cohort replacing Baby Boomers in the workplace with shared experienced on technological advancements and the knowledge economy. Hill (2002) highlighted that Millennials in an organisational context are described as valuing freedom, high expectation on promotions and pay increases, virtual work environment, meaningful and fulfilling work. Their advanced exposure to technology makes them to be a global generation and they are able to accept multiculturalism as a way of life (Raines, 2002).

It is critical for managers and leaders in organisation to understand each generational cohort and accommodate generational differences in attitudes, values, and behaviours. This insight will help them to capitalise on generational differences, using these differences to addresses perceptions of organisational injustices and to enhance the performance of the entire organisational workforce. It is important that every employee is held to the same work expectations, organisational policies, and procedures; yet managers and leaders in public service organisations should also consider individual employee needs and generational differences. Organisational practices that are able to accommodate generational perceptions and address negative perceptions on organisational justice will help to promote an environment of high performance, integrity and employee retention.

It is against this background that it is hypothesised that:

There are significant differences between the generational cohorts regarding their organisational justice perceptions in a public service organisation.

3. Research design and methodology

In order to achieve the purpose of this study; a cross-sectional survey was used which refer to a design that collects data at one point in time from one sample representing the larger population (Wellman, Kruger

& Mitchell, 2009). The design of this study was a quantitative research. The following discussions outline the participants and sampling strategy and measuring instruments of this study.

3.1 Participants and sampling strategy

Sample population of this study comprised of permanent employees of a public service organisation. The study adopted a random sampling technique to determine the sample size based on the guidelines of TerreBlanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006). The participants were requested to complete the questionnaire, resulting in a final sample size of 289 respondents.

Table 1. Generational cohorts of the sample (*n = 289*)

Parameter	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Generational cohorts/Age group		
Millennials born between 1978 and 2000	115	39.8
Generation Xers born between 1965 and 1977	110	38.1
Baby Boomers born between 1946 and 1964	64	22.1

In terms of table 1, the sample of this study comprised of three generational cohorts. The participants included 22.1% (n = 64) of Baby Boomers who are born between 1946 and 1964; 38.1% (n = 110) of Generation Xers who are born between1965 and 1977 while the Millennials who are born between 1978 and 2000 were 39.8% (n = 115).

Table 2. Sample demographic profile (*n = 289*)

Parameter	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	117	40.5
Female	172	59.5
Race		
African	228	78.9
Coloured	23	8.0
Indian	10	3.5
White	28	9.7
Years of service		
1 - 5 years	164	56.8
6 – 10 years	63	21.8
11 – 15 years	41	14.2
Over 16 years	21	7.2
Current position		
Management	49	17
Professional and specialist	134	46.3
General workers	106	36.7

The sample results that are presented in table 2 indicate that the sample size was skewed towards females whom are 59.5% (n= 172) and 40.5% (n=117) were males. In terms of the different race groups represented by the participants, 78.9% (n=228) were African; 9.7% (n = 28) were white; 8% (n= 23) were coloured and 3.5% (n = 10) were Indian. Table 2 also reflect the participants' current position composition which indicate that 17% (n = 49) are in management positions; 46.3% (n = 134) occupied professional and specialist position while 36.7% (n = 106) are employed as general workers. The majority of the participants at 56.8% (n = 164) have between 1 to 5 years of service with the organisation.

3.2 Measuring instrument

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section A measured the participants' biographical details which included race, age group, gender, years of service and current position.

Section B consisted of the measuring instruments Organisational Justice Measurement Instrument (OJMI). The Organizational Justice Measurement Instrument (OJMI) which is virtually self-administering survey and consists of 59 statements measuring the nine dimensions of justice; namely, strategic direction, distributive, procedural, interactional, informational, service delivery

innovation, customer relations, diversity management, ethical leadership and management (Ledimo, 2015). The statements of the questionnaire were configured using the five point Likert scales ranging from 1 as strongly disagree and 5 as strongly agree. In the present study, the reliabilities of the dimensions were used to assess the construct validity and it was measured using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the nine organisational justice dimensions are presented in table 3 below. The results of the coefficients are considered to be satisfactory because they were significantly greater than the recommended 0.70 (Terreblanche *et al*, 2006). They vary from 0.94 (distributive); 0.94 (ethical leadership and management); 0.90 (service delivery innovation); 0.884 (strategic direction); 0.86 (interactional); 0.88 (informational); 0.86 (procedural); 0.81 (diversity management) and 0.79 (customer relations). Overall, the reliability coefficient of the OJMI is 0.95.

Table 3. Number of items and reliabilities for the OJMI

Dimensions	Number of items	Reliability
Organisational justice dimensions (OJMI)		
Distributive justice	12	0.94
Ethical leadership and management	11	0.94
Service delivery innovation	6	0.90
Strategic direction justice	5	0.88
Interactional justice	5	0.86
Informational Justice	7	0.88
Procedural justice	5	0.86
Diversity management justice	4	0.81
Customer relations justice	4	0.79
Overall	*59*	*0.95*

3.3 Research procedure

Data in this study was collected using a cross-sectional quantitative survey research design. This type of survey is relevant because it allows for the collection of data from respondents about their perception (Wellmann *et al*, 2009; Terreblanch *et al*, 2006). Ethics Committees of the public service organisation and research institution granted the researcher the ethical clearance to conduct the study in the organisation. All employees in the organisation were invited to participate voluntarily in the study through an electronic invite. The process of questionnaire completion which included a covering letter was facilitated by the researcher through a group administration session. Covering letter outlined the purpose of the study and it also described ethical conduct principles of the research process such as anonymity, confidentiality, feedback and freedom of choice to participate in the study. The researcher collected completed questionnaires immediately after the sessions and the questioned were kept in a secure place before being captured, coded and analysis.

3.4 Statistical analyses

To analyse the data of the empirical study, the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 20) was used. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and Cronbach's alpha coefficients were conducted in order to determine the internal consistency reliability of the measuring instrument of this study, namely, OJMI. In terms of inferential statistics, the correlational analysis and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to determine the differences between the three generational cohorts on organisational justice perceptions.

4. Results

The means and standard deviations as the descriptive statistics were also conducted for the variables organisational justice and generational cohorts, in addition to the Cronbach alpha results presented above in table 3.

Table 4. Generational cohorts' means and standard deviations for organisational justice dimensions

Organisational Justice Dimensions	Generational Cohorts	Mean	Sample (n)	Std. Deviation
Distributive Justice	Millennials (1978 and 2000)	3.51	115	0.89
	Generation Xers (1965 and 1977)	3.23	110	1.05
	Baby Boomers (1946 and 1964)	3.10	64	0.94
Ethical leadership and management	Millennials (1978 and 2000)	3.58	115	0.84
	Generation Xers (1965 and 1977)	3.26	110	0.99
	Baby Boomers (1946 and 1964)	3.28	64	0.92
Service delivery and innovation	Millennials (1978 and 2000)	3.78	115	0.93
	Generation Xers (1965 and 1977)	3.39	110	1.04
	Baby Boomers (1946 and 1964)	3.53	64	0.97
Strategic direction justice	Millennials (1978 and 2000)	3.76	115	0.79
	Generation Xers (1965 and 1977)	3.45	110	1.01
	Baby Boomers (1946 and 1964)	3.63	64	0.98
Interactional justice	Millennials (1978 and 2000)	3.95	115	0.69
	Generation Xers (1965 and 1977)	3.68	110	0.98
	Baby Boomers (1946 and 1964)	3.86	64	0.89
Informational Justice	Millennials (1978 and 2000)	3.89	115	0.71
	Generation Xers (1965 and 1977)	3.59	110	0.94
	Baby Boomers (1946 and 1964)	3.60	64	0.81
Procedural justice	Millennials (1978 and 2000)	3.68	115	0.80
	Generation Xers (1965 and 1977)	3.19	110	0.99
	Baby Boomers (1946 and 1964)	3.30	64	0.91
Diversity justice	Millennials (1978 and 2000)	3.65	115	0.79
	Generation Xers (1965 and 1977)	3.41	110	1.09
	Baby Boomers (1946 and 1964)	3.57	64	0.92
Customer relations justice	Millennials (1978 and 2000)	3.82	115	0.78
	Generation Xers (1965 and 1977)	3.66	110	0.84
	Baby Boomers (1946 and 1964)	3.71	64	0.86
OJMI	Millennials (1978 and 2000)	3.71	115	0.65
	Generation Xers (1965 and 1977)	3.40	110	0.82
	Baby Boomers (1946 and 1964)	3.45	64	0.73
	Overall OJMI	**3.53**	**289**	**0.74**

Table 4 presents the mean scores and standard deviations of the organisational justice measuring instrument used in this study. In terms of the organisational justice dimensions, the sample of the participants reflected positive organisational justice perceptions and the three generational cohorts obtained the mean scores of above 3.00. Millennials obtained the highest mean scores on all the dimensions and their overall OJMI mean score (m=3.71); followed by the Baby Boomers (m=3.45) and Generation Xers have the lowest overall OJMI mean (m=3.40). The overall mean scores for all the three generational cohorts and the overall mean score of OJMI (m=3.53) are also between the "agree" and

"strongly agree" ratings on the Likert scale; indicating the employees seem to have satisfactory or positive perceptions of organisational justice.

The intercorrelations between the dimensions of organisational justice measured by the OJMI are presented in Table 5. All the dimensions of organisational justice correlate significantly with each other; namely, strategic direction, distributive, procedural, interactional, informational, service delivery innovation, customer relations, diversity management, ethical leadership and management. Their correlations range from a minimum of *r*=0.399 (*p*=<0.01) to a maximum of *r*= 0.831 (*p*=<0.01).

Table 5. Intercorrelations of the OJMI dimensions and reliabilities

Factors	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	D8	D9
D1:Distributive justice	**0.946**								
D2:Ethical leadership and management	.779**	**0.942**							
D3: Service delivery innovation	.672**	.791**	**0.909**						
D4:Strategic direction	.633**	.581**	.576**	**0.884**					
D5:Interactional justice	.399**	.434**	.378**	.596**	**0.862**				
D6:Informational justice	.648**	.720**	.665**	.631**	.591**	**0.887**			
D7:Procedural justice	.801**	.811**	.697**	.669**	.499**	.773**	**0.863**		
D8:Diversity Management	.633**	.664**	.600**	.566**	.589**	.831**	.705**	**0.815**	
D9:Customer relations	.629**	.741**	.643**	.657**	.640**	.785**	.679**	.715**	**0.799**

n = 289; Alpha coefficients are presented in bold values.
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed): $p \leq 0.01$ $p < .01$.

The results of the analysis of variance to determine significant differences in organisational justice perceptions mean scores for generational cohorts are depicted in table 6. The overall results indicates that the three generational cohorts differ significantly in terms of the overall organisational justice mean score ($p \leq 0.01$). In addition, the cohorts differ significantly in the dimensions distributive ($p \leq 0.05$), ethical leadership and management ($p \leq 0.05$), service delivery and innovation ($p \leq 0.05$), strategic direction ($p \leq 0.05$), interactional, informational ($p \leq 0.05$) and procedural justices ($p \leq 0.000$).

Table 7 also indicates that there are a significant difference between the mean scores of the Millennials, Generation Xers and the Baby Boomers in several dimensions of organisational justice. The following dimensions reflected differences among the three cohorts:

− Firstly, the significant differences in the dimension distributive justice (0.409^*), implies that Millennials scored high with the mean score of 3.51 when compared to the Baby Boomers mean score of 3.10 in this dimensions.

− Secondly, the significant differences in the dimension ethical leadership and management (0.320^*), suggests that Millennials scored high with the mean score of 3.58 when compared to the Generation Xers mean score of 3.26 in this dimensions.

− Thirdly, the significant differences in the dimension service delivery and innovation (0.394^*),

indicates that Millennials scored high with the mean score of 3.78 when compared to the Generation Xers mean score of 3.39 in this dimensions.

− Fourthly, the significant differences in the dimension strategic direction justice (0.310^*), reflects that Millennials scored high with the mean score of 3.76 when compared to the Generation Xers mean score of 3.45 in this dimensions.

− Fifth, the significant differences in the dimension interactional justice (0.262^*), reflects that Millennials scored high with the mean score of 3.95 when compared to the Generation Xers mean score of 3.68 in this dimensions.

− Sixth, the significant differences in the dimension informational justice (0.302^*), indicates that Millennials scored high with the mean score of 3.89 when compared to the Generation Xers mean score of 3.59 in this dimensions.

− Lastly, the significant differences in the dimension procedural justice between Millennials when compared with Generational Xers (0.490^*) and Baby Boomers (0.380^*), highlight that Millennials scored high with the mean score of 3.68 when compared to the Generation Xers mean score of 3.19 and Baby Boomers mean score of 3.30 in this dimensions.

These results indicate that there were no significant mean score differences between the three generational cohorts in the dimensions diversity and customer relations justice.

Table 6. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Dimensions		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Distributive Justice	Between Groups	8.139	2	4.069	4.347	0.014*
	Within Groups	267.723	286	0.936		
	Total	275.861	288			
Ethical leadership and management	Between Groups	6.832	2	3.416	3.988	0.020*
	Within Groups	244.972	286	0.857		
	Total	251.804	288			
Service delivery and innovation	Between Groups	8.954	2	4.477	4.576	0.011*
	Within Groups	279.829	286	0.978		
	Total	288.784	288			
Strategic direction justice	Between Groups	5.449	2	2.724	3.170	0.043*
	Within Groups	245.755	286	0.859		
	Total	251.204	288			
Interactional justice	Between Groups	3.969	2	1.985	2.703	0.069*
	Within Groups	210.032	286	0.734		
	Total	214.001	288			
Informational Justice	Between Groups	6.152	2	3.076	4.455	0.012*
	Within Groups	197.480	286	0.690		
	Total	203.632	288			
Procedural justice	Between Groups	14.520	2	7.260	8.870	0.000***
	Within Groups	234.086	286	0.818		
	Total	248.607	288			
Diversity justice	Between Groups	3.259	2	1.630	1.828	0.163
	Within Groups	254.950	286	0.891		
	Total	258.209	288			
Customer relations justice	Between Groups	1.461	2	0.731	1.075	0.343
	Within Groups	194.303	286	0.679		
	Total	195.764	288			
OJMI	Between Groups	6.046	2	3.023	5.572	0.004**
	Within Groups	155.163	286	0.543		

Note: ***$p \leq 0.000$; **$p \leq 0.01$; *$p \leq 0.05$

Table 7. Multiple comparison results

Organisational justice	Generational	(J) Cohorts	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Distributive Justice	Born between 1978 and 2000	Born between 1965 and 1977	0.281	0.129	0.089
		Born between 1946 and 1964	0.409*	0.150	0.021
Ethical leadership and management	Born between 1978 and 2000	Born between 1965 and 1977	0.320*	0.123	0.030
		Born between 1946 and 1964	0.302	0.144	0.111
Service delivery and innovation	Born between 1978 and 2000	Born between 1965 and 1977	0.394*	0.131	0.009
		Born between 1946 and 1964	0.257	0.154	0.290
Strategic direction justice	Born between 1978 and 2000	Born between 1965 and 1977	0.310*	0.123	0.038
		Born between 1946 and 1964	0.129	0.144	1.000
Interactional justice	Born between 1978 and 2000	Born between 1965 and 1977	0.262*	0.114	0.067
		Born between 1946 and 1964	0.082	0.133	1.000
Informational Justice	Born between 1978 and 2000	Born between 1965 and 1977	0.302*	0.110	0.020
		Born between 1946 and 1964	0.290	0.129	0.077
Procedural justice	Born between 1978 and 2000	Born between 1965 and 1977	0.490*	0.120	0.000
		Born between 1946 and 1964	0.380*	0.141	0.022
OJMI	Born between 1978 and 2000	Born between 1965 and 1977	0.311*	0.098	0.005
		Born between 1946 and 1964	0.260	0.114	0.072

Note: ***$p \leq 0.000$; **$p \leq 0.01$; *$p \leq 0.05$

5. Discussion and implications

To date, there has been little research of generational difference on organisational justice within the context of a public service organisation. An examination of the literature review indicates that organisational justice is positively associated to work performance, commitment, trust, retention, job satisfaction and employee wellness. The aim of this study was to assess differences in organisational justice perception across the three generational cohorts.

The results indicate that all the dimensions of the OJMI have acceptable levels of internal consistency within the multicultural context of the South African public service organisation. The correlational analysis shows that there is a positive

correlation between organisational justice dimensions. The results of the mean as the descriptive statistic indicates that employees of the public service organisation seem to have positive perception of all organisational justice dimensions; namely, interactional justice; customer relations; informational; strategic direction; service delivery and innovation; diversity management; procedural; ethical leadership and management and distributive justice.

When assessing the differences between the generational cohorts, post hoc comparisons revealed a consistent trend that Millennials were significantly higher in their mean scores than both Generation Xers and Baby Boomers on all dimensions of organisational justice. This indicates that Millennials generation seems to have a more positive perception that their organisation is just and fair in its practices. According to Pogson, Cober, Doverspike and Rogers (2003) the mean differences between Baby Boomers and the two other cohorts, however, may reflect age-related changes to some extent. Although Generation Xers mean scores were higher than Baby boomers in five dimensions (distributive, ethical leadership and management, service delivery innovation, interactional and customer relations justice), there were no significant differences between the two generational cohorts. This pattern appears to suggest that Millennials demonstrated the highest positive perception of organisational justice across the three cohorts. Literature indicates that these generational differences may be partially attributable to age or the career stages of the three generations (Meriac *et al*, 2010). Millennials with respect to the age at which they completed the OJMI, were significantly younger than participants representing Generation Xers and the Baby Boomer cohorts (Pogson *et al*, 2003; Meriac *et al*, 2010). This implies that younger employees are inclined to have high positive perceptions on organisational justice. These positive perceptions by young employees may also be attributed to the human resource practices of the knowledge economy organisation, which endorses high performance as criteria for promotions and remuneration increases rather than seniority or years of service in an organisation. In addition, the use of technology in today's organisations may be another factor that may be attributed to the positive perceptions.

This study has several practical implications for employees and organisations. Firstly, these finding are noteworthy because it gives organisations inexpensive means of enhancing their employees 'positive perception on organisational justice. Secondly, practitioners and managers in public service organisations need to identify generational differences that influence organisational justice perceptions. Lastly, organisations are able to develop relevant interventions to ensure positive perceptions of organisational justice when managing multigenerational groups; ultimately, this may help to create a more engaged workforce in the public service organisation.

6. Conclusions, limitation and recommendations for future research

This study aimed to provide insight into the generational differences of employees in a public service organisation regarding their organisational justice perceptions. The purpose of this study was achieved because the results provide an assessment of the generational differences between the Millennials, Generation Xers and Baby Boomers cohorts' perception of organisational justice. Young generation in this organisation that are Millennials seems to have a high positive perception of their organisation in terms of its practices and processes of creating a fair and just work environment.

Limitation of this study is that it cannot be generalised to other organisational context other than the one from which data were gathered. Participants of this study sample are from a single organisation in a specific public service organisation. This approach reinforces the internal validity of this study; but it also limits its external validity. Conducting a cross-sectional study rather than a longitudinal design has challenges and limitations in establishing a causal relationship between the variables being studies.

In terms of future research, it is recommended that a replica of this study be conducted in a variety of organisational context in order to allow the results to be extrapolated to other context. A longitudinal study would also assist in establishing a causal relationship between organisational justice and generational cohorts.

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