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# Diversity management approaches for organizational justice

## Insights from Belgian hospitals

*Claudia Toma and Annabelle Martin*

*Diversity management is adopted by organizations in the pursuit of fairness and justice. The main question addressed by the current paper is whether all approaches to diversity management are positively related to organizational justice. We hypothesize that identity-conscious approaches, such as learning and integration, are more beneficial to organizational justice compared to identity-blind approaches, such as fairness discrimination and access legitimacy. We tested this hypothesis in a study conducted in Belgian hospitals with 367 employees who varied in gender, age, tenure, and position in the organization. Based on multiple regression analyses, we found that the learning and integration approach, as well as the fairness discrimination, was positively related to all dimensions of organizational justice. The access-legitimacy was perceived to be the most common approach in hospitals but was unrelated to organizational justice. The effects were moderated by employees' gender and position for two diversity approaches, so female employees benefited less from fairness discrimination, while the low-position employees benefited more from access-legitimacy. We discussed the theoretical and practical implications of those findings.*

Diversity management is a core topic in today's corporate world, with more than two-thirds of executives rating it as «important» (Deloitte, 2023). It is also an important tool in the pursuit of fair and equitable treatment of workers, regardless of their race, gender, and ethnicity (Soni, 2000). At the same time, scientific literature needs to identify which diversity management approaches are beneficial for employees, and especially for the disadvantaged ones (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Podsiadlowski et al., 2013; Thomas & Ely, 1996). Previous studies found a positive impact of diversity management on outcomes such as a sense of inclusion, job satisfaction, affective commitment, job innovation, and performance (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015; Jansen et al., 2016; Li et al., 2020). However,

little is known about which diversity management approaches are useful in bringing fairness and justice to organizations. Diversity management literature frequently refers to justice constructs (Brennan, 2023; Kulik & Li, 2015), but the impact of diversity management on organizational justice often stays at the level of theoretical

models and debates (Dahanayake et al., 2018; Fujimoto et al., 2013). We contend here that empirically testing the link between diversity management approaches and organizational justice is key, given that organizations aim to achieve justice when diversity policies are in place (Kulik & Li, 2015).

In the current paper, we investigate whether different approaches to diversity management are beneficial for organizational justice. We focused on three diversity approaches commonly discussed in the literature, namely fairness discrimination, access legitimacy, and learning integration (Podsiadlowski et al., 2013; Thomas & Ely, 1996). We contend here that not all approaches to diversity management are beneficial for justice. Their relationship should depend on whether diversity management is identity-conscious (learning-integration) or identity-blind (access-legitimacy) and on whether it makes explicit reference to the notions of justice and fairness (fairness-discrimination). Regarding organizational justice, we measured distributive, procedural, interactional, and informational justice (Colquitt, 2001) as it is common practice in the literature. However, we considered the notion of organizational justice as a unitary concept, given the interrelated nature of its forms (Ambrose et al., 2005). We developed further the social and ethical arguments supporting the relation between diversity management and justice and expected the learning-integrating approach to be the most beneficial to organizational justice, given its focus on the integration of people's different values and identities. In exchange, we expected the access legitimacy approach to be less beneficial, given its emphasis on colorblindness and its business-oriented perspective of diversity. Fairness discrimination, despite being an identity-blind approach, was expected to be positively related to organizational justice because of its explicit reference to notions such as fairness and anti-discrimination.

In addition, because diversity management impacts differently advantaged and disadvantaged groups in organizations (Jansen et al., 2016), we also tested whether the relation between diversity management approaches and organizational justice is moderated by employees' status (gender and position) in the organization. We expected that identity-conscious approaches such as learning integration should benefit females and employees in low positions more compared to identity-blind approaches such as access-legitimacy and fairness integration.

## **1. Diversity management approaches**

With the increased diversity of the workforce, organizations have developed different approaches and perspectives to manage diversity (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Thomas & Ely, 1996). Diversity management approaches (also called diversity strategies, perspectives or paradigms) reflect the organizations' normative beliefs regarding the reason to diversify, the value of cultural diversity, and its connection to work processes (Stevens et al., 2008).

There are several reasons why organizations are motivated to diversify their workforce. These reasons are often classified into three categories: ethical-moral, economic-instrumental, and organizational motivation (Mensi-Klarbach & Risberg, 2019). The first category refers to organizations that care about diversity because they aim to reduce inequalities and discrimination. While this motivation may be laudable, it often stems from the organization's need to comply with government laws and directives (Ely & Thomas, 2001). The second category refers to organizations that see diversity as a competitive advantage, to get access to a larger pool of clients and to attract more diverse talents. For example, organizations that hire Muslim employees to get access to more Muslim clients often succeed in their business strategy but are negatively perceived by their employees who feel instrumentalized and not included (Georgeac & Rattan, 2023). The third category refers to organizations that see diversity as an opportunity for change and innovation in their work processes, leadership, and culture. They often associate diversity management with the long-term goal of becoming a learning organization (Dass & Parker, 1999).

Organizations also embrace several diversity ideologies to signal the value of their employees' cultural and social identities. The commonly described ones are assimilationism, colorblindness, and multiculturalism (Guimond et al. 2014; Stevens et al., 2008). Assimilationism and colorblindness are considered identity-blind approaches to diversity management. Organizations that embrace them de-emphasize differences in social identities between employees and assume everybody is the same. They stress that people should be treated equally as individuals and that only individual merit should be considered when making decisions, such as hiring and promotion (Stevens et al., 2008). They also assume that under the applied law, previous discrimination and inequalities will be corrected (Dass & Parker, 1999). The difference between the two approaches is that colorblind ideology ignores social categories but emphasizes treating people as an individual (Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004), while assimilationism promotes the existence of one common social category in society and organizations, to which everybody is expected to adapt (Verkuyten, 2005). Multiculturalism, in contrast, is an identity-conscious approach to diversity management. Organizations that embrace it incorporate social group identity in human resources decisions (Konrad & Linnehan, 1995) and go beyond legal compliance (Dass & Parker, 1999). Such organizations have the conviction that employees' different social identities can be beneficial for work processes as they bring various knowledge and perspectives to the workplace (Thomas & Ely, 1996).

Based on various diversity motivations, diversity ideologies, and organizational processes involved, several approaches to diversity management have been identified in the literature. Thomas and Ely (1996) initially proposed three approaches based on extensive qualitative research with organizations: (1) the fairness and discrimination paradigm, (2) the access and legitimacy paradigm, and (3) the learning and integration paradigm. Dass and Parker (1999) added a fourth perspective, the resistance perspective, where an increase in a diverse workforce is viewed as a threat

to the organization. Based on a systematic, comprehensive, and quantifiable study of diversity strategies in organizations, Podsiadlowski et al. (2013) validated and extended the approach of Thomas and Ely (1996) and integrated the results of Dass and Parker (1999) to suggest a conceptual framework of five diversity perspectives: Reinforcing Homogeneity, Color-Blind, Fairness, Access, and Integration and Learning. However, among those five perspectives, Reinforcing Homogeneity refers to organizations that avoid or even reject a diverse workforce, and thus, this approach is not relevant to the relation with organizational justice in diverse organizations. In addition, Color-Blind and Fairness, are two variations of Fairness Discrimination, one emphasizing the importance of equal treatment for all, and the other the importance of fair treatment for disadvantaged employees. Therefore, given the overlap with Thomas and Ely (1996) and the higher relevance of their model for organizational justice, we decided to use the initial three diversity approaches in our study.

The discrimination-and-fairness approach, known as the assimilation model, sees diversity as a way to reduce unfairness and discrimination. Organizations embracing this approach focus on compliance with laws; diversity progress is primarily measured in terms of retention and recruitment goals. While it promotes fair treatment for all, it emphasizes an identity-blind treatment so that although the staff gets diversified, the work does not (Ely & Thomas, 2001).

The access-and-legitimacy approach, known as the colour-blind model, celebrates differences and individual merit within the workforce. In this approach, diversity makes good business, and it is used as a resource to better connect with clients (Ely & Thomas, 2001). Organizations embracing this identity-blind approach instrumentalize their employees by reducing diversity at their demographic characteristics that fit with the organization's niche market (Bendick et al., 2010).

The learning-and-integration approach, known as the multicultural model, focuses on the inclusion of different perspectives. In this identity-conscious approach, diversity fosters a learning environment in which all employees can benefit from their integration in a diverse work context (Podsiadlowski et al. 2013; Thomas & Ely, 1996). Various cultural identities are reinforced to revise methods, procedures, and tasks in ways that will transcend the organization and its culture (Ely & Thomas, 2001). Diversity is therefore used as a learning resource and not as a business or legal case. The important question here is whether the diversity management approaches matter when looking at their impact on organizational justice.

## **2. Organizational justice**

Organizational justice refers to an individual's perceptions of and reactions to fairness in an organization (Greenberg, 1987). Both diversity management and organizational justice are core components of organizational performance and job sat-

isfaction (Kim & Park, 2017). Organizational justice is often conceptualized along four primary dimensions: distributive, procedural, interactional, and informational (Colquitt, 2001). Distributive justice refers to the equity of the distribution of resources and decision outcomes, while procedural justice concerns the perceived fairness of processes that lead to outcomes (Greenberg & Cropanzano, 1993). Interactional justice deals with the perceived fairness of treatment received by an individual in social interactions, whether individuals are treated with politeness, dignity, and respect, while informational justice focuses on the degree to which individuals are provided with adequate information that explains decisions made or actions taken (Bies, 2001; Colquitt, 2001). Researchers also suggested that organizational justice can be treated as a unitary concept, given the interrelated nature of its dimensions (Ambrose et al., 2005).

Importantly, the quest for justice fulfils key functions in organizations. First, justice is important for economic reasons. Employees are willing to stay in an organization that compensates them fairly. They want to be treated the same and to receive similar compensation based on their contributions, which makes them loyal and engaged toward their organization. This is because fair compensations allow employees to predict the outcomes that they are likely to receive (Cropanzano et al., 2007). Second, justice is important for social reasons. Employees wish to be valued by their organizations, to be respected and esteemed by the organizational management team, but also by their peers, co-workers, and subordinates. The way employees are treated is related to the trust they develop in their organization and is likely to affect the quality of their interactions with co-workers. When the employer mistreats or devalues his employees, their trust and loyalty are harmed, and consequently, their perception of justice and fairness in the organization decreases (Skarlicki & Rupp, 2010). Third, justice fulfills an ethical function. Ethical considerations become more and more important for organizational justice, for example, in influencing how justice judgments are formed or what the consequences of injustice are for employees (Crawshaw et al., 2013). Various legislations and directives stress the ethical obligation for an employer to provide equitable, but also equitable treatment in procedures and interactions. For example, the anti-discrimination laws (e.g., 2007 Anti-discrimination law in Belgium) prohibit the employer from acting in a discriminatory way toward its employees, based on their gender, age, ethnicity, social status, etc., and protect those who are subject to discrimination. Therefore, employees expect their organizations to fulfil their moral and legal obligations and pay careful attention to all decisions regarding justice and fairness (Cropanzano & Stein, 2009).

In sum, what organizations do in terms of diversity management, to ensure that everyone is treated the same way and that everyone receives the same support, recognition, and resources, is essential to the way employees perceive justice in them. At the same time, some organizational perspectives on diversity should be more positively related to justice than others.



### **3. Diversity management approaches matters for organizational justice**

Diversity management was initially adopted in the pursuit of fairness and justice (Kim & Park, 2017). Despite tensions between the business case and social justice approaches in the diversity, equity, and inclusion field (Tomlinson & Schwabenland, 2010), researchers suggest that justice and fairness should be used as key frameworks to evaluate diversity management interventions (Dahanayake et al., 2018).

The common belief among managers and decision-makers is that any diversity management approach leads to fairness and equal treatment in the workplace. However, this conclusion cannot be drawn from the current scientific literature. Several theoretical papers invite an empirical test of the relationship between diversity management and organizational justice (Fujimoto et al., 2013; Girish, 2015) and propose to use organizational justice as a framework to understand the effect of diversity management on various employees' outcomes and attitudes (Richard & Kirby, 1999). At the same time, there are few empirical papers that tested the relationship between diversity management and organizational justice. Two studies are exceptions. Kim and Park (2017) found that diversity management in public organizations increases employees' perception of organizational fairness. They argued that diversity management positively impacts organizational fairness because «diversity management pursues the enhancement of procedural justice and interactional justice and strives to remove discrimination in the organization» (p. 184). A similar effect was found by Magoshi and Chang (2009), who showed that diversity management influences procedural justice, which in turn leads to higher organizational commitment. Both studies found that when employees perceive that diversity management serves their needs, they also perceive their organization as fairer and more just. However, those studies did not distinguish between different approaches to diversity management and their link with organizational justice. The present paper aims to fill this gap and propose that because diversity management approaches differ in the way employees' identities are valued in organizations, they might have a different impact on organizational justice.

One interesting debate is whether an identity-conscious or an identity-blind approach to diversity management brings fairness and justice in the workplace (Kulik & Li, 2015). Identity-conscious approaches to diversity, such as multiculturalism or learning and integration, propose that cultural differences of group members should not only be acknowledged but also respected; literature has shown that they have positive effects on intergroup relations (Guimond et al., 2014), conflict, and racial bias (Verkuyten, 2005). Thus, we also expect that when employees perceive diversity management to be implemented within a learning and integration approach that values and respects their identities, they will also perceive their organization to be fairer and more just. Importantly, we choose to focus on subjectively perceived rather than objectively assessed diversity approaches because previous

research demonstrated that individuals' perceptions of their social environment have a far greater and more direct impact on behavior than the social environment itself (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Krackhardt, 1990).

We hypothesize that higher perceptions of the learning integration approach of diversity management will increase employees' perception of justice in the organization (Hypothesis 1).

In exchange, identity-blind approaches to diversity, while easily endorsed by advantaged employees (Jansen et al., 2016), might be less effective in relation to organizational justice. Within identity-blind approaches, organizations do not value people's various group identities but rather emphasize their individual characteristics. However, ignorance of social and cultural differences cannot bring fairness in organizations, as people need to be respected and recognized for what they are. There might be, however, a difference between the fairness discrimination and the access legitimacy approach. Because in the fairness discrimination approach, there is an explicit reference to fairness, and it is assumed that under the applied law, previous discrimination and inequalities will be corrected (Dass & Parker, 1999), organizations' intention for justice might still be perceived positively.

Thus, we hypothesize that higher perceptions of the fairness discrimination approach of diversity management will also increase employees' perception of justice in the organization, but to a lesser extent compared to the learning integration approach (Hypothesis 2).

A very different pattern should be found in organizations in which the access legitimacy approach is the dominant one. The access legitimacy, known to emphasize the business benefits of diversity, instrumentalizes their employees to enhance their competitive advantage and access to niche markets (Bendick et al., 2010). At the same time, the colour-blindness ideology underlying this approach was found to be negatively related to racial attitudes and prejudice (Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004), to less inclusion and a sense of belonging (Georgeac & Rattan, 2023).

Thus, we hypothesize that higher perceptions of the access legitimacy approach of diversity management will decrease employees' perception of justice in the organization (Hypothesis 3).

#### **4. Moderating role of employees' characteristics**

Diversity management aims to reduce inequalities and improve organizational outcomes, especially for disadvantaged employees (Schoen & Rost, 2021). Therefore, we also explored whether the relation between diversity management and organizational justice was stronger (or weaker) for employees whose characteristics might constitute a disadvantage. We focused here on the employee's gender and hierarchical position in the organization. Previous studies suggest that diversity management does not affect all employees equally. For example, Jansen et al. (2016) found the



colorblind approach to be positively related to work satisfaction and perceived innovation for majority members, while for minority members, a positive relation was found for the multicultural approach. The effects were fully mediated by the extent to which employees felt included in the organization.

More specifically, related to the moderating role of gender, previous studies have found that female employees perceive more positively diversity management practices (Cundiff et al., 2009; Mousa, 2021), but the effect of diversity management on organizational outcomes is not always favorable for females (Choi & Rainey, 2010). For example, Kim and Park (2017) found that female employees perceive diversity management to be negatively related to organizational fairness when compared to male employees. We suggest that this might also depend on the diversity management approach. Previous studies have found that multiculturalism leads to positive effects for minorities, while colorblindness leads to positive effects for majorities (Verkuyten, 2005, 2009). Thus, identity-conscious approaches, such as learning integration, should be more beneficial for females in terms of organizational justice compared to identity-blind approaches, such as fairness discrimination and access legitimacy.

Related to the moderating role of the employee's position, existing results are mixed. A qualitative study by Bacouel-Jentjens and Yang (2019) found that employees who are different in power positions in a given organization perceive differently diversity management efforts. They propose that employees' characteristics, such as power and position, should be systematically considered when testing the impact of diversity management on employees' outcomes. However, Ashikali and Groeneveld (2015) analysed the consequences of diversity management across employees with high and low-ethic positions and found that for both categories of employees, diversity management boosted their inclusion and affective commitment. We thus considered it important to contribute to the debate about whether diversity management benefits all employees and tested the moderating role of employees' gender and position in the relation between diversity management approaches and organizational justice.

We hypothesize that the relation between diversity management approaches and organizational justice will be moderated by employees' gender and position in their organization so that identity-conscious approaches such as learning integration should benefit females and employees in low-positions more compared to identity-blind approaches such as access-legitimacy and fairness integration (Hypothesis 4).

We tested the four hypotheses in an organizational study. The study used cross-sectional data and a convenient sampling technique in seven Belgian hospitals. Hospitals in Belgium are ideal organizations to investigate diversity management for at least two reasons. First, they have been encouraged and received public funding to develop diversity policies. Via employment and public services, Brussels (Diversity Service of Actiris) and Wallonia regions (Wallonia Public Ser-

vice) encouraged organizations, especially the public ones, to adhere to diversity charters and labels and offered financial and human resources to implement diversity policies. Second, more and more hospitals must meet the demands of a more diverse working population and patients and respond appropriately by implementing various diverse practices (Weech-Maldonado et al., 2002). Indeed, given the proximity to Brussels, one of the most multicultural and diverse capitals in Europe, the hospitals in our studies are characterized by the diversity of their employees and patients.

## **5. Method**

### **5.1. Participants**

To conduct the study, we contacted the HR managers of 40 hospitals based in Brussels and the Wallonia region. We previously analyzed their websites and reports to identify if they had a diversity policy or at least some diversity initiatives in place. Eight hospitals with a diversity management policy agreed to collaborate and participate in our study. We communicated the instructions and the link survey to the HR managers, who oversaw the internal communication and the invitation to the study. Thus, each hospital distributed the online survey among their employees via professional email addresses. While the eight hospitals have in common their interest in diversity practices, they are different in location, organization, and mission. Three of them are in Brussels, and five are in Wallonia. Seven of them are public hospitals, four of which are university hospitals, and one is a private hospital. Among those hospitals' total of 8,500 employees, 652 employees volunteered to start the survey, of which 367 fully completed it (287 females, 80 males). The average age of participants was 52.6 years (min = 22; max = 65; *SD* = 6.8). Participants were from all hierarchy levels within hospitals: medical (11.8%), nursing (32.6%), paramedical (25.3%), administrative (22.4%), logistics and technical (3.2%), managerial (2.1%) and human resources (2.6%). The study was conducted both in French and Dutch, and it was approved by the ethical committee of the authors' university.

### **5.2. Measures**

Participants completed an online questionnaire that included all measured variables of our hypotheses. Examples of items for each variable are presented below. Before entering the questionnaire, participants filled in a response consent form and were informed about the confidentiality of the data. Participants were also informed that no identifying information would be measured and that they had the right not to report on all measures if they did not wish to.

### 5.3. Diversity management approaches

To measure employees' perception of diversity management approaches, we used an adapted version of the Diversity Perspective Questionnaire (Podsiadlowski et al., 2013). We measured three of the diversity approaches, namely Fairness (Discrimination), Access (Legitimacy), Integration and Learning, also corresponding to the three diversity approaches originally developed by Thomas and Ely (1996). Participants were presented with nine statements about diversity approaches and were asked to indicate on a 5-point Likert-type scale to what extent they agreed these statements applied to their organization (1-*not at all agree* to 5-*totally agree*). For each approach we presented three items measuring: 1) the organization's motivation to manage diversity (to reduce discrimination, to have access to clients, to boost performance and innovation), 2) the organization's value of employees' social identities (assimilationism, colorblind, multiculturalism) 3) organization's signals for progress and connection with work processes (recruitment of diverse employees, access to diverse clients, organizational change).

The Fairness approach was measured with items such as: «My hospital is mainly focused on applying policies and practices to prevent discrimination» ( $\alpha = .71$ ); the Access approach was measured with items such as: «My hospital recruits diverse staff to have access to patients from diverse backgrounds» ( $\alpha = .76$ ); the Learning and Integration was measured with items such as: «My hospital encourages working in diverse teams, as this leads to richer exchanges and various opinions among colleagues» ( $\alpha = .80$ ).

### 5.4. Organizational justice

Organizational justice was measured with the twenty items of the scale developed by Colquitt (2001), and its French translation was validated by Jouglard-Tritschler and Steiner (2005). The four dimensions of organizational justice were measured, namely distributive justice (four items), procedural justice (seven items), interpersonal justice (five items), and informational justice (four items). Participants indicated on a 5-point Likert-type scale to what extent they agreed with the statements presented (1-*not at all agree* to 5-*totally agree*).

Examples of items for distributive justice, «My outcomes reflect the effort I have put into my work» ( $\alpha = .95$ ); for procedural justice, «Procedures used to make decisions affecting me are applied consistently» ( $\alpha = .86$ ); for interpersonal justice, «People in charge of decisions affecting me treat me politely» ( $\alpha = .93$ ); for informational justice, «People in charge of decisions affecting me communicate details in a timely manner» ( $\alpha = .92$ ). The overall justice construct was the average of the four dimensions ( $\alpha = .78$ ).

## 5.5. Control variables

We included gender, age, organizational tenure, and hierarchical position as control variables.

These variables were accounted for control as they are known to potentially affect diversity management and organizational justice (Kim & Park, 2017). Hierarchical position was grouped into two categories: low position (nurse, logistics, administrative, paramedical; all attributed the value  $-1$ ) and high position (H.R., managerial staff, doctors; all attributed the value  $+1$ ). Gender was a dichotomous variable, with the value 1 attributed to females and  $-1$  to males. Age and tenure were used as continuous variables.

## 6. Results

### 6.1. Descriptive statistics and preliminary analyses

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and correlations among all study variables for the full sample. The three diversity approaches correlate between them, but the correlations are rather small and medium. A confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) was conducted, supporting the existence of three factors. This model reached acceptable fit,  $\chi^2 = 222.83$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 45$ , RMSEA = .08, CFI = .91, as suggested by recent literature (RMSEA between 0.05 and 0.08 are acceptable; CFI higher than 0.90 indicating good fit – Goretzko et al., 2024).

Before analyzing the link between diversity approaches and organizational justice, we tested if some diversity management approaches were perceived to be more present in hospitals compared to others, and whether employees' gender and position moderated this perception. We used a 3 (diversity approach)  $\times$  2 (gender)  $\times$  2 (position) mixed ANCOVA to test this idea. Age and tenure were used as covariates. Results showed that the access legitimacy approach ( $M = 3.41$ ,  $SD = .62$ ) was perceived to be more present in the hospitals, compared to fairness discrimination ( $M = 3.01$ ,  $SD = .78$ ) and learning integration ( $M = 3.00$ ,  $SD = .98$ ),  $F(1,363) = 44.87$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .071$ . No difference was found between fairness discrimination and learning integration, and no moderation by gender or employee position,  $F_s < 1$ .

### 6.2. Diversity management approaches as predictors of organizational justice

We hypothesized that the learning integration approach would be more positively associated with organizational justice than fairness discrimination and access legitimacy, which we expected to be negatively related to organizational justice. We tested these hypotheses using multiple regression analyses in which organizational

**Table 1**  
*Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations between study variables*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Gender	1											
2. Age	52.6 (8.71)	1										
3. Position	-.159**	.075	1									
4. Tenure	-.042	.709**	-.064	1								
5. Fairness discrimination	3.01 (0.78)	.050	-.024	-.001	1							
6. Access legitimacy	3.41 (0.63)	-.046	.020	-.054	.157**	1						
7. Learning integration	3.00 (0.89)	.006	-.017	-.054	.539***	.118*	1					
8. Distributive justice	2.56 (1.13)	-.177***	.167***	-.034	.310***	.127*	.307***	1				
9. Procedural justice	2.72 (1.75)	-.060	.021	-.062	.414***	.094	.455***	.392***	1			
10. Interactional justice	3.82 (0.97)	.069	.012	-.047	.348***	.023	.326***	.265***	.599***	1		
11. Informational justice	2.91 (0.98)	.048	-.049	.005	.413***	.062	.437***	.328***	.666***	.693***	1	
12. Overall justice	3.00 (0.74)	-.044	.056	-.042	.471***	.100	.481***	.672***	.815***	.805***	.847***	1

**Table 2**  
*Effects of diversity approaches on distributive, procedural, interactional, and informational justice (controlling for age, gender, position, and tenure)*

Predictors	Distributive justice			Procedural justice			Interactional justice			Informational justice				
	B	SE	t	B	SE	t	B	SE	t	B	SE	t	p	
(Constant)	.639	.413	1.55	1.053	.264	3.99	2.462	.361	6.82	.001	.772	.347	2.22	.027
Fairness discrimination	.289	.083	3.47	.221	.053	4.16	.301	.073	4.13	.001	.299	.070	4.27	.001
Access legitimacy	.117	.087	1.35	.023	.056	< 1	-.058	.076	< 1	.448	-.009	.073	< 1	.907
Learning integration	.247	.072	3.44	.278	.046	6.06	.214	.063	3.41	.001	.341	.060	5.64	.001
Age	.080	.073	1.10	.072	.046	1.54	.018	.064	< 1	.779	.064	.062	1.04	.302
Gender (1 female)	-.216	.066	-3.26	-.061	.042	-1.44	.068	.058	1.17	.244	.039	.056	< 1	.479
Position (1 high)	.211	.075	2.83	.006	.048	< 1	.034	.065	< 1	.600	-.053	.063	< 1	.399
Tenure	-.007	.007	-1.05	-.008	.004	-1.80	-.004	.006	< 1	.495	-.003	.006	< 1	.664
<i>Model summary</i>	R <sup>2</sup> = .188, Adj. R <sup>2</sup> = .172			R <sup>2</sup> = .260, Adj. R <sup>2</sup> = .246			R <sup>2</sup> = .155, Adj. R <sup>2</sup> = .138			R <sup>2</sup> = .240, Adj. R <sup>2</sup> = .225				



justice (respectively distributive, procedural, interactional, and informational justice) was the predicted variable, and the three diversity approaches were simultaneously the predictors. We also controlled for employees' age, gender, position in the organization, and tenure.

Results showed that the learning and integration approach ( $B = .27, SE = .04, t = 6.16, p < .001$ ), but also the fairness and integration ( $B = .07, SE = .05, t = 5.45, p < .001$ ), predicted positively the overall score of organizational justice and all its form. This was not the case for the access legitimacy approach, which was unrelated to organizational justice ( $B = .02, SE = .05, t < 1$ ). Table 2 presents the detailed results separately for distributive, procedural, interactional, and informational justice. This table confirms the positive relation between the learning and integration approach, and respectively fairness discrimination, and all dimensions of organizational justice, thus confirming our Hypotheses 1 and 2. The relation was found to be non-significant (although negative for interactional and informational justice) for access-legitimacy, which partially confirms our Hypothesis 3. The effects were the same for all forms of organizational justice, thus confirming their inter-related nature.

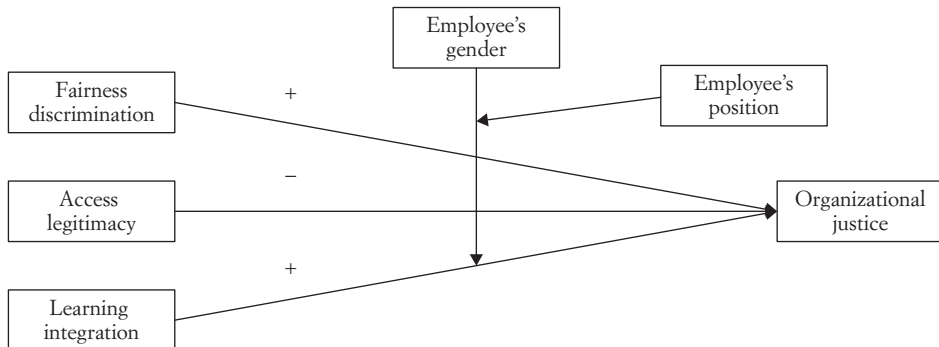
### 6.3. Interaction effects of diversity approaches with employee's gender and position

We also tested whether the effect of diversity approaches on organizational justice depended on the employee's gender and position in the organization, which was our Hypothesis 4 (see Figure 1 for the overall model). We tested in the same model three key interaction effects using the PROCESS v.4 macro of Hayes (Model 3), namely the two-way interaction between diversity management approach and employee position, the two-way interaction between diversity management approach and employee gender and the three-way interaction between diversity management approach, employee position, and employee gender, controlling for age and tenure. We runned the PROCESS macro separately on each dimension of organizational justice.

Overall, for the *learning integration approach*, no interaction effects were found, and this was for all dimensions of organizational justice. Again, only the main effect of this diversity approach on organizational justice was found, suggesting that regardless of their position and their gender in the organization, all employees experienced more justice when the learning integration approach of diversity was put in place.

For the *fairness discrimination approach*, beyond the main effect, interaction effects were found on interactional and procedural justice. On interactional justice, two-way interaction with gender showed that the fairness discrimination approach benefited the male employees more than the female employees,  $B = -.27, SE = .09, t = -2.90, p = .004$ . A three-way interaction with gender and position was also

**Figure 1**  
*Conceptual model and hypotheses of our study*



found on interactional justice,  $B = -.19$ ,  $SE = .09$ ,  $t = -2.02$ ,  $p = .044$ . By looking at the simple effects, we found that the fairness discrimination approach benefited the less to females in high positions ( $B = .30$ ,  $SE = .16$ ,  $t = 1.92$ ,  $p = .055$ ), followed by the men in low positions ( $B = .53$ ,  $SE = .15$ ,  $t = 3.44$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and this compared to men in high ( $B = 1.21$ ,  $SE = .28$ ,  $t = 4.24$ ,  $p < .001$ ), or female in low positions ( $B = .37$ ,  $SE = .07$ ,  $t = 4.91$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

A similar three-way interaction pattern was found on procedural justice, but the effect was only marginally significant,  $B = -.13$ ,  $SE = .07$ ,  $t = -1.86$ ,  $p = .063$ . By looking at the simple effects, we found again that the fairness discrimination approach benefited the less to females in high position ( $B = .31$ ,  $SE = .12$ ,  $t = 2.60$ ,  $p = .009$ ), followed by the men in low positions ( $B = .31$ ,  $SE = .12$ ,  $t = 2.65$ ,  $p = .008$ ), and this compared to men in high ( $B = .73$ ,  $SE = .22$ ,  $t = 3.36$ ,  $p < .001$ ), or female in low positions ( $B = .42$ ,  $SE = .06$ ,  $t = 7.27$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

For the *access legitimacy approach*, interaction effects were found on procedural and interactional justice. On procedural justice, a two-way interaction with position showed that the access legitimacy approach benefited the employees in low positions more than the employees in high positions,  $B = -.38$ ,  $SE = .09$ ,  $t = -4.18$ ,  $p < .001$ . A three-way interaction with gender and position was also found,  $B = .19$ ,  $SE = .09$ ,  $t = 2.05$ ,  $p = .040$ . By looking at the simple effects, we found that the access legitimacy approach did not benefit females in high positions ( $B = -.24$ ,  $SE = .19$ ,  $t = -1.36$ ,  $p = .17$ ), and harmed males in high positions ( $B = -.68$ ,  $SE = .27$ ,  $t = 3.20$ ,  $p = .013$ ). For employees in low positions, access legitimacy was more beneficial to men ( $B = .45$ ,  $SE = .14$ ,  $t = 4.24$ ,  $p = .001$ ), than to women, for whom the effect was only marginally significant ( $B = .14$ ,  $SE = .08$ ,  $t = 1.85$ ,  $p = .064$ ).

Two similar two-way interactions with position were found on interactional justice and informational justice showing that the access legitimacy approach benefited the employees in low positions more than the employees in high positions,  $B = -.33$ ,  $SE = .11$ ,  $t = -2.82$ ,  $p = .005$ , and respectively,  $B = -.22$ ,  $SE = .12$ ,

$t = -1.87, p = .062$ . No three-way interactions were found on interactional justice and informational justice.

## 7. Discussion

Overall, the results of this study offer important insights into the relationship between diversity management and organizational justice by showing that it depends on the approach used to manage diversity but also on the employees' characteristics. We have shown that the access-legitimacy approach of diversity is perceived to be the most common one in Belgian hospitals. Importantly, it is also perceived to be less effective in predicting organizational justice, which is in line with our Hypothesis 3. When controlling for the other two diversity approaches, access-legitimacy was unrelated to organizational justice, in general, and unrelated to all forms of organizational justice.

The learning-integration approach was less present in hospitals, but, in line with our Hypothesis 1, it was perceived to be the most effective for organizational justice, in general, and for all forms of organizational justice. We also found that fairness-discrimination approach, was perceived to be effective and positively related to organizational justice, although to a lesser extent than the learning integration approach, which is in line with our Hypothesis 2.

The interaction effects of diversity approached with employees' gender and position brought some interesting insights. The learning integration approach, considered an identity-conscious approach to diversity in the literature, is often perceived more positively by disadvantaged groups (Jansen et al., 2016). However, this study found no moderation effects with employees' gender and position. In other words, all employees experienced more justice when the diversity was managed from a learning integration perspective, namely when the organization valued people's differences and social identities.

The fairness-discrimination approach, although perceived to be positively related to all forms of organizational justice, was perceived to be less beneficial for females with regard to procedural and interactional justice. This is consistent with the results of Kim and Park (2017) and suggests that a diversity approach focused on reducing discrimination and on making everyone fit into one norm (often the majority male norm) might not be beneficial for female employees, especially when they are in high positions. Diversity management in organizations whose primary aim is to reduce discrimination by treating everyone the same might hide or neglect subtle forms of discrimination against disadvantaged employees (Dobbin & Kalev, 2022). This could explain the perception held here by the female employees.

Access-legitimacy approach although perceived to be unrelated to organizational justice, was found to be more beneficial for employees in low positions on procedural, interactional and informational justice. As a reminder, employees in low

position were nurse, administrative, logistics and paramedical employees, so mainly people who are in contact with patients, more than the high-position employees. One explanation of why the low employees benefit more from the access legitimacy approach lies in the very philosophy of this approach. The hospitals embracing this approach might pay careful attention to the well-being and fairness of employees in low positions for instrumental reasons: they are the ones being the most in contact with clients and thus serving the business model of those organizations. However, we again found that females in high power benefit the less in terms of procedural justice, one of the key dimensions in ensuring people's longevity in organizations (Colquitt, 2001). According to Kim and Park (2017), it is especially on procedural and interactional justice that diversity management could make a difference for the employees. So, it is noteworthy to find that it is exactly on those dimensions that females benefit the less within access-legitimacy, but also with fairness and discrimination.

Taken together, the present results have important theoretical and practical implications. At the theoretical level, it brings empirical support to previous theoretical models that proposed to use organizational justice as a framework to better understand the impact of diversity management on employees' perception of fairness and justice (Fujimoto et al., 2013; Kulik & Lee, 2015). Importantly, it shows that the effects of diversity management on organizational justice are not always positive; it depends on the diversity approaches, their ideology (Jansen et al., 2016), and their underlying motivation (Mensi-Klarbach & Risberg, 2019). Our study also contributes to the literature on diversity management approaches (Dass & Parker, 1999; Podsiadlowski et al., 2009; Thomas & Ely, 1996) and provides supplementary empirical support for their conceptual model. We show that diversity approaches are relevant to understanding diversity management's effects in a relatively unexplored domain, namely organizational justice. In addition, our findings contribute to the debate about whether diversity management benefits all employees (Cundiff et al., 2009; Mousa, 2021) and showed that females might not always perceive more justice in organizations (Choi & Rainey, 2010) when diversity management is implemented according to the access-legitimacy approach or the fairness-discrimination approach.

At the practical level, our results have some important implications. Diversity, inclusion, and organizational justice are pillars of equitable workplaces. However, the increased diversity of the workforce does not necessarily lead to perceptions of organizational justice (Hoang et al., 2022). Therefore, it is important to actively promote diversity practices that can bring lasting changes in organizational justice. Contrary to the common belief that any diversity management approach leads to fairness and equal treatment in the workplace, our results invite managers to carefully choose the appropriate strategy to manage diversity. It suggests that the choice of methods and processes to achieve diversity, the communicated motivation, and the signals regarding the way organizations value employees' social identities might lead to very different perspectives that employees are able to see. Importantly, despite all efforts, it could be that an employee's mere perception of diversity manage-

ment strategies that instrumentalize diversity (access-legitimacy) or that unauthentically fight against discrimination (fairness discrimination) might lead to unwanted effects on organizational justice. This is particularly the case for females in high positions, who perceive less procedural and interactional justice when the fairness discrimination approach is dominant. This suggests that managers should pay careful attention to how employees evaluate their diversity initiatives, especially when employees are females or employees in low positions. Because those employees already perceive less distributive justice (see Table 2), they might be particularly sensitive and skeptical of what organizations do for diversity and inclusion.

It is also important to acknowledge some limitations of the present study. First, we cannot draw any firm conclusion regarding the causal link presented in our conceptual model, given that we used cross-sectional data to test it. At the same time, we believe that considering diversity management as an antecedent of organizational justice is both theoretically plausible and in line with previous studies (Kim & Park, 2017) and conceptual models (Fujimoto et al., 2013; Kulik & Lee, 2015). Third, it would have been important to have a larger set of variables pertaining to employees' status and disadvantaged position in the organization, such as ethnicity, nationality, socio-economic status, etc. In addition, the conclusions for the high-status and low-status positions were based on aggregated categories that might deserve a more fine-grained analysis. In its current form, the study is limited in conclusions regarding the role of employees' characteristics as moderating factors. Third, the study is based on employees' self-reports, and both key measures (diversity management approach and organizational justice) were assessed via the same employees, which could inflate the common method bias and the multicollinearity. Future studies should use different methods to test the current hypothesis and extend the current results by considering organizational justice as a mediating variable between diversity management and key organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment, or job performance. In addition, future research is needed to test the underlying mechanisms of the positive relation between fairness discrimination, and respectively access legitimacy, with organizational justice. It could be that different mechanisms might be responsible for the positive relation, given the different nature of those two diversity management approaches. Fourth, the study is conducted in only one country and within one organizational domain, thus limiting the generalization of those findings. More studies are needed in different types of organizations and various national contexts, which might also bring to attention the moderating role of cultural context. It could be that what is considered identity-blind or identity-conscious approaches of diversity management in one culture might not be the same in another culture.

In conclusion, our findings suggest that the diversity management approach matters for organizational justice, with identity-conscious approaches having a stronger impact on organizational justice than identity-blind approaches, also as a function of employee's gender and position in the organization.

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### **Diversity management approaches for organizational justice: Insights from Belgian hospitals**

Diversity management is adopted by organizations in the pursuit of fairness and justice. The main question addressed by the current paper is whether all approaches to diversity management are positively related to organizational justice. We hypothesize that identity-conscious approaches, such as learning and integration, are more beneficial to organizational justice compared to identity-blind approaches, such as fairness discrimination and access legitimacy. We tested this hypothesis in a study conducted in Belgian hospitals with 367 employees who varied in gender, age, tenure, and position in the organization. Based on multiple regression analyses, we found that the learning and integration approach, as well as the fairness discrimination, was positively related to all dimensions of organizational justice. The access-legitimacy was perceived to be the most common approach in hospitals but was unrelated to organizational justice. The effects were moderated by employees' gender and position for two diversity approaches, so female employees benefited less from fairness discrimination, while the low-position employees benefited more from access-legitimacy. We discussed the theoretical and practical implications of those findings.

*Keywords:* diversity management, identity-conscious approach, organizational justice, gender.

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