

BBBEE fairness perceptions and job performance: The role of leadership styles and psychological availability



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Orientation: Studies suggest that employees' fairness perceptions of the workplace are positively linked to job performance. Employees associate perceptions of fairness in the workplace with transformational and transactional leaders. It is important to recognise that employees' personal resources can be compromised when they perceive a lack of fairness in the workplace.

Research purpose: This study investigated the role of leadership styles and psychological availability on the relationship between fairness perceptions of Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) and job performance of employees, within the South African work setting.

Motivation for the study: Little is known about the association between the fairness perceptions of BBBEE and job performance. Also, less is known about the mediating variables that can influence this relationship.

Research approach/design and method: A quantitative cross-sectional design was employed. Convenience sampling yielded 300 participants from whom data were collected.

Main findings: The results showed that the perceived fairness of BBBEE had an indirect relationship with job performance by means of transactional leadership styles and psychological availability.

Practical/managerial implications: Achieving optimal job performance from this group of employees hinges on transactional leaders satisfying the needs of employees in return for employees meeting agreed-upon obligations. Furthermore, leaders need to monitor the extent to which employees are psychologically available at work.

Contribution/value-add: The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model was extended to demonstrate the impact that fairness perceptions of BBBEE have on organisational behaviour. The study also revealed that the fairness perceptions of BBBEE affect job performance through transactional leadership styles and psychological availability.

Keywords: BBBEE; fairness; job performance; leadership styles; psychological availability.

Introduction and contextualisation

Identifying the antecedents that can provide a basis for the precise prediction of job performance has been the interest of several studies (refer to Goetz et al., 2021; Harzer et al., 2021; Kundi et al., 2021; López-Cabarcos et al., 2022). It is important to determine the factors that predict employee job performance due to some of its documented benefits such as the achievement of organisational goals (Viswesvaran & Ones, 2017), enhanced organisational effectiveness (Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000) and maintaining a competitive advantage (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2019).

Early research has shown that several factors influence employees' job performance, including general mental ability (Hunter & Hunter, 1984), procedural knowledge (Sternberg, 1997), job experience (McDaniel et al., 1988), personality (Judge & Bono, 2001) and perceptions of fairness within the workplace (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Adams (1965) and Greenberg (1988) found that the job performance of employees decreased when employees perceived themselves to be receiving inequitable outcomes in the workplace. Recent research has also reported that employees' perceptions of fairness at work result in enhanced in-role performance (Hyder et al., 2022; Swalhi et al., 2017). The research presented here suggests that at some level, the perceptions of (un)fairness that employees hold of their workplace influence their job performance.

According to prior studies, Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE)¹ is perceived as discriminating against those who are not beneficiaries of the BBBEE programme (Harris, 2017). Yousef's (2000) research suggests that individuals may perceive a legislative framework practised in the organisation as unfair, leading to frustration and reduced effort in their work. To this end, it may be likely that the perceived unfairness of BBBEE is likely to translate into a decline in the job performance of employees. This places pressure on organisations operating within the South African context to undertake the task of understanding how perceptions of BBBEE influence employees' job performance. However, little is known about the psychological outcomes related to fairness perceptions of BBBEE.

Burns (1978) and Thompson et al. (2021) reported that followers of leaders who adopt a transformational leadership orientation may be inclined to focus on concerns of fairness and justice. This could be attributed to moral ideals, such as fairness, equality and treating others with respect, being emphasised by transformational leaders (Brown & Trevino, 2003; Thompson et al., 2021). Extending this reasoning to the transactional leadership style, this form of leadership has been assumed to promote a work environment that is just (Strom et al., 2014). For example, transactional leaders sufficiently clarify the leader's expectations concerning an employee's responsibilities, as well as the benefits associated with satisfying and meeting those responsibilities (Bass, 1999). Thus, employees' informational needs such as those regarding their responsibilities are satisfied and employees do not have to rely on personal sense-making or cues of justice to determine their standing in the organisation (De Cremer et al., 2010). However, the role of transformational and transactional leadership styles in assisting employees to manage their response to BBBEE remains to be determined.

Employees' fairness perceptions in the workplace influence their level of psychological availability (Khan et al., 2022). Psychological availability is considered as an individual's confidence or readiness to focus on work tasks despite feeling anxious (Kahn, 1990). Psychological availability is a psychological condition of employee engagement, which means that psychological availability, among others, influences the extent to which employees are engaged in their work (Kahn, 1990). Although little is known about the association between fairness perceptions of BBBEE and psychological availability, considering this perspective, it can be assumed that, when employees perceive BBBEE to be fair, their emotional, physical and cognitive availability expands, thus making this relationship worthwhile to explore.

1. BBBEE is the 'economic empowerment of all black people including women, workers, youth, people with disabilities and people living in rural areas through diverse but integrated socioeconomic strategies' (Republic of South Africa, 2014).

Research purpose and objectives

The study set out to investigate the mediating role of leadership styles and psychological availability on the relationship between the fairness perceptions of BBBEE and job performance of employees.

Literature review

This section presents the theoretical framework underpinning the study, the study's key variables and the relationships among the variables.

Theoretical framework underpinning the study: Job Demands-Resources theory

The Job Demands-Resource (JD-R) theory is a theoretical framework that views aspects of the workplace as either job demands or job resources that may influence the well-being and performance of employees at work (Tummers & Bakker, 2021). Job demands are the characteristics of work that require an employee to exert effort physically, emotionally or cognitively (Demerouti et al., 2001). Job resources refer to the organisational, physical and psychological characteristics of work, which provide opportunities for employees to achieve work goals while managing work demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), and personal resources that facilitate coping with job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). Job resources may buffer against the unfavourable outcomes that job demands assert on employees (Tummers & Bakker, 2021).

The current study asserts that perceptions of BBBEE can be considered a job demand when BBBEE is perceived to be unfair within the workplace. The reason behind this thinking is that Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) framed organisational justice as a stressor due to its likelihood of inducing adverse responses in individuals experiencing injustice. According to Mowday and Colwell (2003), interpersonal interactions may cause stress to individuals due to unfair treatment. Elovainio et al. (2001) demonstrated that procedural and relational injustice causes occupational strain. These examples cast perceived injustice within the workplace as a demand.

Research suggests that leadership, when studied alongside the JD-R theory, examines leadership behaviour through subordinates' evaluations, considering aspects like leaders' consideration of employee needs and concerns (Antonakis & Day, 2017). In line with this reasoning, the current study asserts that perceiving BBBEE as unfair may lead employees to perceive their leaders as unsupportive, unfair and inconsiderate and possibly leading them to think they lack sufficient resources, thus influencing their unwillingness to enhance their levels of job performance.

Conversely, the study contends that perceiving BBBEE as fair can act as a job resource for employees. When employees closely evaluate their leaders' leadership style, they look towards their leaders to maintain said fairness perceptions. This energises employees and leads them to think they have

adequate job resources, such as fair and considerate leaders, and clear tasks instructions and performance standards, which in turn influences their willingness to enhance their levels of job performance.

Notably, in this study, psychological availability is considered a personal resource. Perceiving BBBEE as fair may likely cause employees to appraise job demands positively, enhance their confidence in managing undesirable job demands and readiness to invest their energies in performing work tasks, while the opposite may cause employees to feel less confident in doing so.

Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment

Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment refers to the 'economic empowerment of all black people including women, workers, youth, people with disabilities and people living in rural areas through diverse but integrated socioeconomic strategies' (Republic of South Africa, 2014, p. 4). The purpose of the BBBEE was to confront the systematic barring of black South Africans from meaningfully participating in the economy and to reduce inequality (Republic of South Africa, 2007). In 2007, the Minister of Trade and Industry issued the Codes of Good Practice (Codes) in accordance with *Section 9 of the BBBEE Act 53 of 2003*, to serve as an implementation framework and to function as targets in the attainment of BBBEE (Republic of South Africa, 2007). The codes are founded on the following indicators: ownership, management control, skills development, enterprise and supplier development, and socioeconomic development (Republic of South Africa, 2007).

Despite the established Codes, BBBEE is viewed as an injustice towards previously disadvantaged groups (News24, 2013). According to the B-BBEE Commission (2022), since 2019, JSE-listed companies have a reported 0% of 100% black ownership. Pike et al. (2018) reported that BBBEE has resulted in tender corruption, where companies with an unsatisfactory BBBEE score are awarded tenders despite not having the necessary competencies; companies bidding for tenders were paid for the services upfront despite not having performed or completed the work that was contractually agreed upon.

Job performance

Job performance is a multidimensional construct (Campbell, 1990) and relates to one's ability to add to the achievement of organisational goals (Campbell, 1990). Anitha (2014) defined job performance as one's ability to do the work that one was hired to do. According to Borman and Motowidlo (1993, 1997), two factors, namely, task and contextual performance, constitute performance.

Task performance (TP) is defined as the behaviours prescribed by job descriptions (Sparrowe et al., 2001). Contextual performance refers to actions that are discretionary, which indirectly contribute to the effectiveness and performance of the organisation (Zeithaml et al., 1990).

Empirical and conceptual studies have identified two facets of contextual performance, namely, organisational citizenship behaviours directed towards the organisation (OCBO), which refer to actions that immediately benefit the organisation, and individual-level organisational citizenship behaviours (OCB-I), that is, behaviours that indirectly benefit the individual employee (Williams & Anderson, 1991).

The focus of the present study will be on the behaviours that are necessary for the day-to-day functioning of the organisation (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Williams & Anderson, 1991) and those extra-role behaviours that are aimed at the individual, also known as OCB-I, contributing to one's effectiveness in performing work activities (Williams & Anderson, 1991). Notably, OCB-I is associated with an increased likelihood of improved job performance (Mubarak & Mumtaz, 2018). These authors attribute this to employees' deliberate decision to assist colleagues with their work tasks. Therefore, for this reason, OCB-I, as a subset of job performance, was examined as a possible outcome variable concerning its relationship with fairness perceptions of BBBEE.

Leadership styles

Bass (1985) drew from Burns' (1978) book on political leadership and presented the theory of transformational leadership. The theory was revised and termed the Full Range of Leadership Model (see Avolio & Bass, 1991). The model contains both transformational and transactional leadership. Transformational leaders are defined as individuals who inspire their followers in the action of achieving organisational goals (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transactional leadership is an exchange process between a leader and followers of the leader. The centre of the exchange is premised on the condition that contractual obligations are satisfied (Bass, 1985).

According to Bass (1985), transformational leadership can be accomplished in the following ways: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and, finally, individualised consideration. The transactional leadership style comprises the following dimensions: contingent reward (the leader clarifies the task and performance standards and provides resources, as well as rewards followers upon the achievement of results and effort expenditure) (Bass & Riggio, 2006); management by exception (active) (the leader monitors followers' performance and takes corrective action to ensure standards are met); management by exception (passive) (a leader intervenes after the behaviour has caused the problem to become serious); and laissez-faire (avoid leading and guiding employees).

The full-range leadership theory is not without criticism. Firstly, it has been argued that the theory treats idealised influence and inspirational motivation as distinct dimensions, yet research shows evidence of conceptual and empirical overlap concerning the constructs (Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). Secondly, the theory neglects to include other

important effective leadership behaviours (Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). For example, the theory fails to distinguish between monetary and non-monetary rewards (Jensen et al., 2019). To this end, Jensen et al. (2019) reconceptualised the transformational leadership concept as the deliberate actions that foster, convey and support a common organisational vision (Jensen et al., 2019). The scholars revised the 13-item leadership measure and included additional dimensions, namely, contingent nonpecuniary rewards, contingent pecuniary rewards and contingent sanctions.

Psychological availability

To be psychologically available refers to 'having the physical, emotional or psychological resources to engage at a particular moment' (Kahn, 1990, p 714). Individual resources are the physical, emotional and cognitive resources individuals employ to perform their work tasks. Exhaustion of these resources results in withdrawal from engaging in tasks. Personal resources such as psychological availability may be useful to facilitate the positive appraisal of the current situation. Employees who are psychologically available are more likely to give less attention to anxieties and can cognitively focus their attention on physically carrying out work-related tasks and being empathetic to co-workers (Kahn, 1990). Employees high in psychological availability feel motivated and adapt to challenging situations and are open to learn and to think differently about situations (Kahn, 1990).

Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment and leadership

Previous research seems to suggest that perceptions of fairness within the workplace and transformational leadership styles are directly related. For example, Tyler (1986) revealed that procedural justice determines subordinates' evaluations of their leader's ability to lead. Song et al. (2012) discovered that procedural justice directly influences transformational leadership styles. Also, transformational leadership styles partially mediated the relationship between procedural justice and OCB in the workplace.

Not only have perceptions of fairness within the workplace been shown to be related to transformational leadership styles but also distributive justice has been shown to be positively related to transactional leadership styles (Pillai et al., 1999). Konovsky and Pugh (1994) argued that employees would almost certainly evaluate fairness within the workplace in terms of distributive justice and this would inform the extent to which they are willing to accept being led by a leader who exhibits a transactional style of leadership. A possible explanation for this could be that the relationship between the transactional leader and a subordinate is based on the premise of social exchange, where the transactional leader outlines the employee's responsibilities, the leader's expectations and compliance benefits (Bass, 1985).

So far, the literature has suggested that fairness perceptions of employees within the workplace are related to both transformational and transactional leadership styles. A possibility that has not been considered within the literature is the possible relatedness between employees' fairness perceptions of BBBEE and transformational as well as transactional leadership styles. Based on the literature provided earlier, it is possible to expect that transformational and transactional leaders would behave in ways that would engender perceptions of fairness in relation to BBBEE. Therefore, in order to test these relationships in the hope of providing support for the theoretical links as originally conceptualised, the current study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Perceived fairness of BBBEE is statistically significantly related to (a) transformational leadership styles and (b) transactional leadership styles.

Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment, leadership and job performance

Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment in relation to leadership has received some attention in past research (Grobler et al., 2019), as BBBEE is purposed with correcting the injustices faced by black South Africans (Dreyer et al., 2021). Compliance with BBBEE is only mandatory for all organs of state and public companies, as well as for companies that wish to engage in economic transactions with all organs of state and public companies (B-BBEE Commission, 2016). For the organisations that choose to implement BBBEE, organisational leaders must give consideration to how BBBEE is experienced by employees (Grobler et al., 2019), because research suggests that employees' perceived fairness in the workplace has important behavioural outcomes, such as job performance. For example, if employees perceive a sense of fairness within the workplace, be it workplace practices, systems or policies, the employees may respond to this perceived fairness by enhancing their job performance (Colquitt et al., 2001). On the other hand, should employees perceive a sense of unfairness in the workplace, the employees may be more likely to engage in deviant behaviour, such as sabotage (Ambrose et al., 2002).

Following on from the above, studies also show that transformational leadership styles have a positive relationship with employees' levels of job performance, organisational citizenship behaviour, trust, effort, commitment, motivation, satisfaction and organisational effectiveness, as well as productivity levels (Barbuto & Burbach, 2006; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Masa'deh et al. (2016) found that both transformational and transactional leadership styles positively impact job performance. Thus, based on this review of the literature, one could argue that the perceived fairness of BBBEE could influence organisational outcomes through its potential impact on job performance. That is to say that the perceived fairness of BBBEE could lead to the enhancement of employees' job performance through

both transformational and transactional leadership styles. Based on the theoretical links presented, the following hypothesis was developed:

H2: Transformational and transactional leadership styles mediate the relationship between perceived fairness of BBBEE and job performance.

Perceptions of fairness of Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment and psychological availability

Very little is known about the relationship between fairness perceptions of BBBEE and psychological availability within the South African context. To be psychologically available refers to 'having the physical, emotional or psychological resources to engage at a particular moment' (Kahn, 1990, p. 714). It is a psychological condition of employee engagement, which means it influences the extent to which employees are engaged in their work and is concerned with an individual's readiness or confidence in their ability to invest the self in task behaviours (Kahn, 1990). What is known, however, is the link between organisational justice and employee engagement, possibly due to the fact that several research studies have been proven to show that employee engagement is associated with commitment, health, job performance, lower absenteeism and job satisfaction (Hakanen et al., 2006; Halbesleben, 2010; Schaufeli et al., 2008).

Research highlights the significance of perceptions of fairness in the workplace as an essential element for enhancing employment engagement (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Maslach et al., 2001; Moliner et al., 2008). For example, Alvi and Abbasi's (2012) study revealed that employees' perceptions of fairness (distributive and interactional justice) within the banking industry in Pakistan were positively related to the levels of employee engagement. Strom et al. (2014) showed that distributive and procedural justice positively correlated with employee engagement. Similarly, in another study that investigated the employee engagement of managers, Biswas et al. (2013) reported that organisational justice, specifically distributive and procedural justice, was positively related to employee engagement.

Although no studies have been found that have presented a link between the fairness perceptions of BBBEE and psychological availability, it is assumed that when BBBEE is perceived as unfair and thus as a demand, it may pose a threat to employees' personal resources, including psychological availability. Employees may feel worn out and may get the sense that their personal resources are inadequate. Personal resources such as psychological availability may be useful to facilitate the positive appraisal of the current situation. Based on the above, the following hypothesis was developed:

H3: Perceived fairness of BBBEE is related to psychological availability.

Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment, psychological availability and job performance

Empirical evidence showing the predictability of the relationship between fairness perceptions of BBBEE and job performance through psychological availability remains limited. Psychological availability is an important construct to investigate, given that research seems to suggest that people draw on their physical, emotional and cognitive resources to perform work tasks (Kahn, 1990). Research located by the present researcher demonstrates the association between organisational justice, work engagement and work performance. Kahn (1990) defined work engagement as investing energy in one's work. Rahman and Karim (2022) showed that work engagement mediated the relationship between organisational justice, specifically distributive justice and extra-role performance (OCB-I).

Work engagement, as opposed to psychological availability, has increasingly been found to have a positive association with job performance. For example, Yongxing et al. (2017) suggested that enhanced job performance is the result of employees being engaged in the workplace. Consistent with this argument, Schaufeli et al. (2006) found a significant positive relationship between work engagement, in-role performance and extra-role performance. Xanthopoulou et al. (2008) discovered that the relationship between self-efficacy and job performance was mediated by work engagement. Ismail et al. (2019) investigated the relationship between employee engagement and job performance and the mediating effects of creativity on this relationship.

In view of the above literature, it can be expected that the fairness perceptions of BBBEE have an indirect relationship with job performance through psychological availability, because the literature has demonstrated a link between perceptions of fairness in the workplace and work engagement, and a positive link between work engagement and job performance. Therefore, the following hypothesis was devised:

H4: Perceived fairness of BBBEE has an indirect relationship with job performance through psychological availability.

Research design

Participants and setting

Individuals needed to be proficient in English and have at least a year of work experience in a South African organisation to be eligible to participate in the study. The participants of the study were a convenience sample of 300 employed individuals across South African-based organisations, of which 69% were female and 30% were male. Majority of the participants were of African descent (80%). The English language was identified as the dominant language spoken by the participants (20%). Most of the participants held a master's degree (24%), were professionally qualified (44%) and worked in the education sector (46%).

Measuring instrument

The participants were required to complete the BBBEE Fairness Perception Questionnaire, Transformational and Transactional Leadership Scales (Jensen et al., 2019), the Psychological Conditions Scale (PCS) (May et al., 2004) and the Job Performance Scale (JPS) (Williams & Anderson, 1991).

The Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Fairness Perception Questionnaire

The locally developed and validated measure by Mabitsela (2023) consists of 31 items. The internal reliability coefficients for each subdimension were as follows: empowerment ($\alpha = 0.969$), professional development ($\alpha = 0.947$), effectiveness ($\alpha = 0.936$) and fair treatment ($\alpha = 0.874$). The items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). An example of an item from the scale is: I am in support of qualified black people having majority control of an organisation. The overall Cronbach alpha coefficient of the measure was 0.965.

Transformational and Transactional Leadership Scales

The Transformational and Transactional Leadership Scales (Jensen et al., 2019) comprise 13 items. The scales measured four clusters of leadership behaviours, namely, transformational leadership, transactional leadership (contingent nonpecuniary rewards), transactional leadership (contingent pecuniary rewards) and transactional leadership (contingent sanctions). Examples of questions include: 'My leader concretises a clear vision for the organisation's future' and 'My leader seeks to make employees accept common goals for the organisation'. Jensen et al. (2019) reported high Cronbach alpha coefficients for the leadership dimensions (transformational leadership, 0.895; contingent nonpecuniary rewards, 0.939; contingent pecuniary rewards, 0.884; contingent sanctions, 0.885). This measure reportedly has convergent validity, discriminant validity and measurement invariance across groups, such as rating sources, sectors and time.

The Psychological Conditions Scale

The PCS (May et al., 2004) was used to measure psychological availability with five items. The items are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). An example of an item is: I am confident in my ability to handle competing demands at work (May et al., 2004). The measure has received empirical support from South African studies. For example, Rothmann and Rothmann (2010) reported a reliability coefficient of 0.84. Laba (2018) reported a reliability coefficient of 0.90 and found the scale to be valid for the South African population.

The Job Performance Scale

Finally, job performance was measured using the 14 items from the JPS (Williams & Anderson, 1991). The items administered to the participants related to in-role behaviour (IRB) and organisational citizenship behaviour that are directed towards individuals (OCB-I). The items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree)

to 5 (strongly agree). An example of an item from the scale is: I adequately complete assigned duties. Williams and Anderson (1991) reported a Cronbach alpha of 0.91 (IRB) and 0.88 (OCB-I). Previous South African studies have reported satisfactory reliability coefficients for the IRB scale of 0.78 (Peral & Geldenhuys, 2020) while the OCB-I scale was reported to have a reliability coefficient of 0.77 (Peral & Geldenhuys, 2020).

Procedure

Permission to conduct the research was granted by the Industrial Psychology and People Management's Research Ethics Committee of the University of Johannesburg (clearance number: IPPM 2018-260 (D)). Participants were presented with an online self-administered survey. They were informed of the purpose of the research, that participation was completely voluntary, that no rewards would be awarded for participating, that there were no risks associated with participating, nor would there be adverse consequences for choosing to withdraw from the study, and that confidentiality and anonymity would be ensured.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were investigated using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) statistical programme 25 (SPSS, 2018). Using the Hayes PROCESS approach (Preacher & Hayes, 2004), the mediation model was carried out using the R programming software. Model 4 (Hayes, 2013) was used to test for direct and indirect relationships. With Model 4, the direct relationship involving the independent variable (x) on the dependent variable (y) is established. This relationship is referred to as path c. The indirect relationship of x on y is referred to as paths a and b, while path c' represents the overall relationship of x on y.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Prior to performing the regression analysis on the data, the descriptive statistics were evaluated to determine the normality of the data. As can be seen in Table 1, the data met

TABLE 1: Summary of the descriptive statistics.

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
BBBEE fairness perception questionnaire	108.830	23.847	-1.132	1.515
Empowerment	53.390	12.861	-1.625	2.360
Professional development	24.630	8.492	-0.091	-0.651
Effectiveness	26.650	6.934	-1.093	0.942
Fair treatment	11.980	2.882	-1.272	1.620
Leadership	44.633	1.1359	-0.590	0.225
Transformational leadership	15.027	4.130	-0.861	0.348
Transactional leadership	29.607	7.961	-0.372	-0.058
Psychological availability	21.157	4.542	-1.979	4.522
Job performance	52.973	9.864	-1.736	4.791

Source: Mabitsela, T. (2023). *The relationship between BBBEE and job performance: The mediating effects of leadership styles and psychological availability*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Johannesburg

BBBEE, Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment.

the requirements of normality (Curran et al., 1996). Following the inspection of the mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis, the Cronbach alpha for the Transformational and Transactional Leadership Scales, PCS and the JPS was reported as follows: 0.949 (Transformational Scale); 0.897 (Transactional Scale); 0.957 (PCS) and 0.910 (JPS).

Multiple regression analysis

A multiple regression analysis was performed to test the hypotheses of the study. The results can be seen in Table 2.

The results support hypothesis 1, which stated that perceived fairness of BBBEE relates to: (1) transformational and (2) transactional leadership styles. The results show that

the fairness perceptions of BBBEE, more specifically empowerment ($\beta = 0.084; t = 3.560; p < 0.000$), professional development ($\beta = 0.083; t = 2.837; p < 0.005$) and fair treatment ($\beta = 0.215; t = 1.993; p < 0.047$), had statistically significant relationships with transformational leadership. The results also showed that perceived fairness of BBBEE, more specifically empowerment ($\beta = 0.190; t = 4.096; p < 0.000$) and professional development ($\beta = 0.259; t = 4.544; p < 0.000$), are related to transactional leadership styles. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is confirmed.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that perceived fairness of BBBEE relates to job performance through: (1) transformational leadership styles and (2) transactional leadership styles. The results reported in Table 2 show that transformational

TABLE 2: Direct and indirect relationships.

Direct relationship between independent variable and mediator				
IV and Med		Dependent: Transformational leadership		
Variable	Estimates	SE	T	p
Intercept	4.948	0.981	5.042	0.000
Empowerment	0.084	0.024	3.560	0.000
Professional development	0.083	0.029	2.837	0.005
Effectiveness	0.037	0.044	0.845	0.399
Fair treatment	0.215	0.108	1.993	0.047
IV and Med		Dependent: Transactional leadership		
Variable	Estimates	SE	t	p
Intercept	12.350	1.924	6.419	0.000
Empowerment	0.190	0.046	4.096	0.000
Professional development	0.259	0.057	4.544	0.000
Effectiveness	0.053	0.085	0.625	0.533
Fair treatment	-0.057	0.212	-0.268	0.789
Direct relationship between IV, mediator on DV				
IV and Med on DV		Dependent variable: Job performance		
Variable	Estimates	SE	t	p
Intercept	21.898	2.115	10.354	0.000
Empowerment	0.209	0.050	4.185	0.000
Professional development	-0.106	0.061	-1.739	0.083
Effectiveness	0.244	0.090	2.702	0.007
Fair treatment	1.072	0.225	4.776	0.000
Transformational leadership	0.212	0.120	1.762	0.079
	Estimate	Lower CI	Upper CI	p
Indirect relationships through transformational leadership				
Empowerment	0.018	0.09	-0.003	0.04
Professional development	0.018	0.094	-0.002	0.04
Effectiveness	0.019	0.098	-0.002	0.05
Fair treatment	0.008	0.444	-0.009	0.04
Fair treatment	0.047	0.11	-0.009	0.13
Direct relationship between IV, mediator on DV				
IV and Med on DV		Dependent variable: Job performance		
Variable	Estimates	SE	t	p
Intercept	21.085	2.156	9.782	0.000
Empowerment	0.198	0.050	3.962	0.000
Professional development	-0.128	0.062	-2.061	0.040
Effectiveness	0.243	0.090	2.714	0.007
Fair treatment	1.127	0.222	5.076	0.000
Transactional leadership	0.151	0.061	2.469	0.014
	Estimate	Lower CI	Upper CI	p
Indirect relationships through transactional leadership				
Empowerment	0.029	0.01	0.006	0.06
Empowerment	0.028	0.016	0.005	0.06
Professional development	0.039	0.014	0.006	0.08
Effectiveness	0.008	0.524	-0.017	0.04
Fair treatment	-0.008	0.77	-0.076	0.05

Table 2 continues on the next page →

TABLE 2 (Continues...): Direct and indirect relationships.

Direct relationship between independent variable and mediator				
IV and Med		Dependent: Psychological availability		
Variable	Estimates	SE	t	p
Intercept	5.839	0.823	7.091	0.000
Empowerment	0.103	0.020	5.188	0.000
Professional development	-0.081	0.024	-3.327	0.000
Effectiveness	0.174	0.037	4.750	0.000
Fair treatment	0.601	0.091	6.638	0.000
Direct relationship between IV, mediator on DV				
IV and Med on DV		Dependent variable: Job performance		
Variable	Estimates	SE	t	p
Intercept	15.148	1.857	8.155	0.000
Empowerment	0.089	0.043	2.067	0.040
Professional development	0.020	0.052	0.385	0.700
Effectiveness	0.020	0.079	0.247	0.805
Fair treatment	0.316	0.202	1.559	0.120
Psychological availability	1.336	0.121	11.005	0.000
Indirect relationships through psychological availability				
	Estimate	Lower CI	Upper CI	P
Empowerment	0.137	0.000	0.081	0.20
Professional development	-0.109	0.000	-0.178	-0.05
Effectiveness	0.232	0.000	0.135	0.34
Fair treatment	0.810	0.000	0.558	1.10

SE, standard error; DV, dependent variable; CI, confidence interval; IV, independent variable; Med, mediator.

leadership styles ($\beta = 0.212$; $t = 1.762$; $p < 0.079$) did not influence the relationship between perceived fairness of BBBEE and job performance, while transactional leadership styles did ($\beta = 0.151$; $t = 2.469$; $p < 0.014$). Furthermore, the results indicated that empowerment (estimate = 0.028*; lower CI = 0.005 | upper CI = 0.06) and professional development (estimate = 0.039*; lower CI = 0.006 | upper CI = 0.08) had a positive indirect relationship on job performance through transactional leadership styles, as the CI intervals did not go through zero.

The results support hypothesis 3, which stated that perceived fairness of BBBEE relates to psychological availability. The results show that empowerment ($\beta = 0.103$; $t = 5.188$; $p < 0.000$), professional development ($\beta = -0.081$; $t = -3.327$; $p < 0.000$), effectiveness ($\beta = 0.174$; $t = 4.750$; $p < 0.000$) and fair treatment ($\beta = 0.601$; $t = 6.638$; $p < 0.000$) are related to psychological availability, thus confirming the hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4 proposes that perceived fairness of BBBEE relates to job performance through psychological availability. As can be seen in Table 2, the hypothesis was supported. Psychological availability influenced the relationship between perceived fairness of BBBEE and job performance ($\beta = 1.336$; $t = 11.005$; $p < 0.000$). Furthermore, the results indicated that empowerment (estimate = 0.137***; lower CI = 0.083 | upper CI = 0.19), effectiveness (estimate = 0.232***; lower CI = 0.135 | upper CI = 0.34) and fair treatment (estimate = 0.810***; lower CI = 0.558 | upper CI = 1.10) had a positive indirect relationship with job performance through psychological availability, as the CI intervals did not go through zero, while professional development (estimate = -0.109***; lower CI = -0.178 | upper CI = -0.05) had a negative indirect relationship with job performance through psychological availability.

Discussion

Studies suggest that employees' perceptions of fairness within the workplace affect employees' behaviour (Akram et al., 2016; Gurbuz et al., 2016; Tziner & Sharoni, 2014). Within the context of this study, it was important to understand if fairness perceptions that people hold of BBBEE influence employees' job performance. Based on the JD-R model, the primary objective was to test a proposed multiple mediation model, with leadership styles and psychological availability mediating the relationship between fairness perceptions of BBBEE and job performance.

Hypothesis 1 set out to test whether fairness perceptions of BBBEE were related to transformational and transactional leadership styles. The hypothesis was supported. When employees perceive BBBEE as fair, they are likely to associate such perceptions with the transformational leader. This may be due to the understanding that the transformational leader provides enabling conditions for employees to experience BBBEE as fair in the workplace, such as placing the emphasis on treating subordinates with respect and dignity. The current study's results are consistent with previous research which has found a positive link between transformational leadership styles and organisational justice (Alamir et al., 2019). Prior research has also shown moderate relatedness between empowerment and transformational leadership styles (Özaralli, 2003).

Also, important to mention was that the fairness perceptions of BBBEE, specifically empowerment and professional development, were found to have a direct relationship with transactional leadership styles. The finding suggests that, when employees perceive BBBEE as empowering and perceive a sense of professional development, they are likely

to associate such perceptions with leaders who demonstrate a transactional leadership style orientation. The current study's findings are similar to previous results by Ambad et al. (2021), who found that empowerment acted as a mediator in the relationship between transactional leadership and follower performance.

Following from the above hypotheses, the study's findings revealed that the fairness perceptions of BBBEE did not have an indirect relationship with job performance through transformational leadership styles, thereby partially not supporting hypothesis 2. On the other hand, the fairness perceptions of BBBEE had an indirect relationship with job performance through transactional leadership styles. No studies could be found in the previous literature that are similar to those found in the testing of hypotheses 2. One way to interpret this finding is that the participants placed more importance on the exchange process between themselves and their superior, where expectations are clearly articulated by the leader and a clear outcome can be anticipated based on the agreement made between leaders and their subordinates.

The results of the study support hypothesis 3 of the study that stated that the fairness perceptions of BBBEE have a direct relationship with psychological availability. This finding corroborates a similar finding by Ghosh et al. (2014). Deepa (2020) found that organisational justice was related to physical, emotional and cognitive job engagement. This finding is indicative that fair perceptions of BBBEE are likely to increase employees' levels of psychological availability.

In testing hypothesis 4, it was found that the fairness perceptions of BBBEE had a positive indirect relationship with job performance through psychological availability. A similar finding was presented by Ismail et al. (2019) who found a positive relationship between work engagement and job performance among Lebanese employees, suggesting that employees' job performance improves as their psychological availability increases at work.

One probable explanation for the outcome of hypothesis 4 is that when employees perceive BBBEE as fair, then employees become more willing to invest their energies, i.e. physical, emotional and cognitive resources, towards fulfilling job responsibilities and performing extra-role activities directed towards the individual and thus contributing towards the achievement of organisational goals.

Implications for practice and research

The findings of this study seem to suggest that the attributes of a transactional leader are of particular importance than those of a transformational leader in facilitating fairness perceptions of BBBEE. For the employee, perceiving BBBEE as fair is contingent upon a shared understanding, a negotiation of some sort between a leader and follower

regarding the rewards or benefits that a follower will gain from the practice of BBBEE.

What is important to remember is that the same standards should be applied to everyone, and the process applied should be impartial, accurate, representative of key stakeholders, correctable, and in line with ethical standards (Leventhal, 1976, 1980; Leventhal et al., 1980). Transactional leaders should also be mindful to treat employees with the necessary fairness, dignity and respect to not only increase fairness perceptions of BBBEE but also make employees more willing to enhance their job performance. Where necessary, human resource practitioners can provide managers with training courses that focus on building the knowledge and skills of a transactional leader.

It is worth mentioning that in some instances it may not be possible for employees to benefit from the practice of BBBEE and, when unfavourable outcomes are the reality for some, the transactional leader should inform employees of the need for more proactive BBBEE practices to be implemented in the areas where representation lacks, make extra efforts to educate employees about the BBBEE procedures and practices used in reaching decisions, and honestly justify to employees all BBBEE-related decisions made.

This current study revealed that the fairness perceptions of BBBEE not only have implications for the transactional leader but also for the personal resources of employees, namely, psychological availability. The extent to which employees perceive that BBBEE is implemented fairly in their place of work may very well influence employees to invest themselves physically, cognitively and psychologically at work when their organisation of employment upholds its commitments to practice BBBEE in accordance with what employees regard to be fair. This suggests that employers will need to monitor the extent to which employees are psychologically available at work. This should not be a once-off process but should rather be such that employees' levels of psychological availability are regularly evaluated by administering the PCS (May et al., 2004).

Perceived fairness of BBBEE has the potential to lead to improved physical, cognitive and emotional energies, thereby possibly sensitising organisations to the importance of managing perceived fairness perceptions related to BBBEE. What is important to take note of is, in such cases, the BBBEE fairness perception measure could aid this process. It therefore becomes important for human resource practitioners and industrial psychologists to devise interventions that assist individuals in managing the unpleasant perceptions caused by BBBEE.

The BBBEE fairness perception measure could contribute towards investigating the relationship between fairness perceptions of BBBEE and other work-related behaviour and outcomes. Future studies could investigate the potential influence of perceived unfairness of BBBEE on organisational

retaliatory reactions (Skarlicki et al., 1999) and workplace revenge (Tripp & Bies, 2009).

Limitations and recommendations

It should be mentioned that this study is not without its limitations. For instance, the distribution of participants was not equal. In addition, most participants were from the higher education sector. For this reason, generalising the findings to the groups that are underrepresented should be done with caution. Therefore, future studies should aim to include a representative sample of ethnic groups and sectors.

Another limitation of this study was that the data gathering occurred over a single point in time. The challenge here is that individuals' fairness perceptions of BBBEE may change over time, which has implications for the transactional leader, as well as the psychological availability and job performance levels of employees. Information gathering from participants at different times was not possible using a cross-sectional survey strategy. Therefore, a longitudinal study would allow for a better understanding of the true nature of the relationship between the fairness perceptions of BBBEE and job performance. It would provide a better understanding of the role of leadership styles and psychological availability.

Conclusion

The study makes a valuable contribution to the limited body of knowledge on the relationship between BBBEE and job performance, transactional leadership styles and psychological availability. The study expanded on the JD-R theory by incorporating perceptions of BBBEE, transactional leadership styles and psychological availability constructs. Unfair perceptions of BBBEE practices and the policy itself may cause individuals to experience fairness violations and uncertainty and to feel unsettled, thereby impacting the level of effort one exerts in contributing to achieving the desired goals of the organisation. The BBBEE fairness perceptions measure can assist organisations in better understanding the perceptions of the policy as well as how these perceptions influence work outcomes.

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Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

Authors' contributions

This study forms part of T.M.'s doctoral study. Ms Mabitsela was responsible for the conceptualisation of the study. T.M. was also responsible for the writing of the original study which included the methodology, investigation (collection of data and project administration), validation and formal analysis. M.G. and K.L. oversaw the supervision of the study and together with T.M. conceptualised the study and assisted with the formal analysis of the study.

Ethical considerations

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Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, T.M., upon reasonable request.

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