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Executive Summary

With respect to turbulent labor markets characterized by technological change, demographic changes and geopolitical events, organizational justice is the key leverage point for International Human Resource Management (IHRM) to sustain trust, engagement and performance. By drawing on Greenberg's four-dimensional model — distributive justice, procedural justice, informational justice and interpersonal justice — this report reframes IHRM as both the designer and defender of fairness throughout an employee's career path. Section 2.1 provides examples of how algorithmic hiring, performance calibration and digital monitoring can erode justice unless IHRM designs processes that are explainable, participatory and provide appeal routes for employees; it uses the Meta and Starbucks cases to demonstrate the consequences of a fairness-by-design approach to IHRM. Section 2.2 argues that macro forces reconfigure expectations of justice, requiring sensitive, transparent communication and ethically grounded distribution of “pain” when restructuring. Section 2.3 proposes a justice-based approach to closing skills gaps—ensuring fair access to reskilling, internal equity when “buying” scarce talent, and benefits that bind people to the organisation. Section 2.4 describes a personal action plan based on Gibbs' cycle to promote fair leadership practices. The report concludes that IHRM is the steward of justice and that a focus on designing and defending fairness in the workplace is essential to achieving sustainable performance.

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1. Introduction

Organizations are operating in a context of ongoing technological, demographic and geopolitical disruption. In these environments, employees are evaluating not just the outcomes they experience, but the degree to which their experiences are shaped by processes and treatment that are fair. The report builds on Greenberg's (four dimensional) model of justice — distributive justice, procedural justice, informational justice and interpersonal justice — to assert that the primary role of IHRM is to design and defend fairness throughout the global organization's workforce. Doing so preserves legitimacy, strengthens engagement and enables execution during change. Examples of organizations that have developed strategies to achieve these goals include Starbucks (through its benefits, unionization and technology adoption); the tech industry (e.g., Meta's performance calibration); and healthcare industry (e.g., nurse scheduling and burnout) (Greenberg, 1987; Colquitt et al., 2001).

2. Main Body

2.1 Technology and the Challenge to Organisational Justice

2.1.1 Procedural and distributive justice in the algorithmic workplace.

AI is creating new approaches to hiring and performance management, however, the black box nature of decision-making creates significant barriers to procedural justice (i.e., opaque rules and no opportunity for voice or appeal) and distributive justice (i.e., biased outcomes). There is considerable evidence that if algorithms used in recruiting and other HR functions are not designed with fairness in mind, they may embed data, model and deployment biases into the decision-making process. Therefore, it is imperative for organizations to develop auditing, validation and bias management capabilities for all AI-powered systems. As regulatory bodies begin to enforce the application of principles of fairness and accountability in HR technologies, it is clear that IHRM has a critical role to play in ensuring that hiring and performance management systems are auditable, explainable and accountable (Hilliard et al., 2022; Reuters, 2024).

2.1.2 Performance calibration and the justice lens.

There is increasing concern over the fairness implications of public disclosure of performance distribution practices at some large technology companies. Where calibration is perceived as a pretext for headcount reduction, the absence of transparent rationales, clear criteria and appeal routes threatens procedural and distributive justice, and poor communication risks interpersonal injustice. Globally, the practical lessons learned by IHRM are to publish evidence-based standards for performance rating, provide raters with training on reducing bias, conduct regular bias audits, and to separate forced distribution of employees from decisions regarding severance to minimize cynicism and litigation risk.

2.1.3 Informational justice and digital monitoring.

Remote and hybrid work arrangements have greatly increased the amount of employer monitoring. Data protection regulations in the UK now specify requirements for fairness in

monitoring that include necessity, proportionality, transparency and consultation with employees (ICO, 2023). Surveys show many workers feel uneasy about AI monitoring; opposition grows when tracking is covert, purpose is unclear or metrics are error-prone, underscoring the centrality of clear explanations for preserving trust (Pew Research Center, 2023; American Psychological Association, 2023). IHRM should engage in privacy-impact assessments, design monitoring systems with employee representatives, and communicate why, what and how data are collected and analyzed, as well as providing employees with mechanisms to raise objections.

2.1.4 Starbucks as an illustrative case of “fairness-by-design” risks.

When Starbucks begins using data and/or AI to optimize operational efficiency, partner perceptions will depend on how tools are framed. If Starbucks frames data/AI as a means to enable partners to perform better rather than as a tool to monitor them, then they must communicate the impacts of tools on partner's schedules, incentives, and evaluations. If data/AI will significantly alter workflows or add intensity to existing measurement practices, then the company must establish mechanisms for partners to understand and object to those changes, otherwise there is potential for a justice deficit (Reuters, 2024).

2.2 Macro-Factors as Triggers for Justice Perceptions

2.2.1 Demographics and interpersonal justice.

More diverse, multigenerational workforces heighten expectations for dignified treatment, inclusion and civility at work—core to interpersonal justice. In frontline services (hospitality and retail), daily interactions amplify minor slights: perceived disrespect by supervisors can cascade into turnover and union interest. There is substantial research that supports the relationship between justice and employee attitudes and behaviours including trust, commitment and performance. Meta-analytic studies have shown that each dimension of justice predicts unique outcomes and therefore that IHRM will benefit from developing and implementing specific and targeted interventions to address each area of justice (Colquitt et al., 2001). Investing in civility training programs and providing ongoing bias interrupting training and practices for all leaders is not "soft" HR practice it is critical to creating an environment where the performance of the company and its employees can flourish.

2.2.2 Geopolitics, restructuring and distributive justice.

Geopolitical shocks (such as sanctions and supply chain disruptions) often lead to restructuring or relocation of operations. Employees judge the fairness of the decision-making process and whether the decision to stay or go was based upon the same set of criteria across locations, and the generosity of severance packages and job placement assistance provided during this time period. Starbucks' union context highlights how benefits design and timing become fairness flashpoints: controversy arose when new benefits were offered to non-union stores but withheld from unionised ones, triggering legal disputes and perception risks around distributive justice and anti-union motive. IHRM must develop and implement guidelines and standards that protect the interests of all employees regardless of location, ensure the consistency of employment related decisions and provide support for union representation in order to maintain trust and regulatory compliance (Duane Morris LLP, 2023).

2.2.3 IHRM's role in fair communication during crises (informational justice).

Trust depends on timely, truthful explanations. During contested decisions (for example, market exits, wage adjustments), leadership must provide clear rationales and evidence, acknowledge uncertainties and specify support for affected groups. Regulatory and advisory guidance (for example, UK ICO on monitoring) underscores that transparency and consultation are no longer optional—they are compliance expectations aligned with informational justice. IHRM should script “explainability packs” for leaders (why/what/how; alternatives considered; appeals) and align communication cadence to decision milestones to prevent information vacuums that fuel rumours and perceived injustice (ICO, 2023).

2.2.4 Healthcare as a justice pressure-cooker.

The nature of health care staffing and patient safety protocols creates a high degree of expectations of justice. A recent meta-analysis conducted by researchers in the *JAMA Network Open* found that nurse burnout is directly correlated to reduced patient safety and quality of care. The implications of this finding elevate the importance of fairness in scheduling and workload assignments. When employees perceive that work assignments are unfair, stress increases and outcomes decrease. The need for transparent rules (procedural); equitable distribution of tasks (distributive); respectful and supportive management (interpersonal); and timely and accurate communication (informational) is amplified in health care settings due to the consequences of increased stress and decreased morale (JAMA Network Open, 2024).

2.3 Closing Skills Gaps through a Justice-Based Approach

2.3.1 “Build”: procedural justice in development access.

Persistent skills shortages in tech and healthcare require systematic reskilling. But “who gets the opportunity?” is a justice question. To achieve procedural justice, organizations must publish eligibility criteria, use multiple methods to identify diverse talent (to eliminate bias) and provide accessible avenues for appeal. Research has demonstrated that transparent, participatory scheduling and equitable distribution of learning opportunities improves job satisfaction and retention among nurses and similar results have been found in studies examining the effects of artificial intelligence-based scheduling systems on employee perceptions of fairness and autonomy (BMC Nursing, 2025a; BMC Nursing, 2025b). When IHRM develops and implements procedures that provide visibility and opportunities for employee input, employees perceive development as a right rather than a favor.

2.3.2 “Buy”: distributive justice and internal equity when hiring scarce talent.

Hiring premiums to attract highly skilled candidates can negatively affect incumbent employees if internal equity is ignored. Organizations can mitigate the negative effects of hiring premiums and promote internal equity by communicating a transparent pay structure and publishing pay ranges (when legally permissible) to demonstrate why some candidates received higher premium offers than others. Additionally, organizations operating within a union environment (e.g. Starbucks) may be subject to litigation or a justice backlash resulting from unequal benefits provided to unionized versus non-unionized employees. IHRM should conduct pay equity analyses prior to offering the position and communicate the rationale for any differences in pay to the employee to avoid allegations of distributive justice and retaliation against union activities (Duane Morris LLP, 2023).

2.3.3 “Bind”: distributive justice to retain talent.

Benefits that reflect organizational commitment to fairness and caring for all levels of employees and types of contracts strengthen employee retention. An example of a fairness-enhancing benefit is Starbucks' provision of free healthcare access and its College Achievement Program

with Arizona State University for eligible part-time "partners". These benefits credibly communicates respect and long-term investment, particularly for frontline workers balancing study and work. Benefits such as these become a source of loyalty and stability in industries characterized by high employee turnover (hospitality and retail) as long as they are administered equitably and communicated clearly to employees (Starbucks, 2023; Starbucks/ASU, n.d.).

2.3.4 Justice-by-design in AI-enabled workforce management.

When organizations begin using optimization technology to manage workforce schedules and staffing levels, fairness features (e.g., weights given to employee preference, constraints for equity, transparency dashboards to report scheduling decisions, and employee appeal processes) must be included in the product development specification rather than being an afterthought. Recent studies examining the use of artificial intelligence to schedule hospital staff have found that the success of these technologies depend on the perceived fairness of the scheduling systems developed, which includes fair representation by employees in the development of the system (participatory design); if not, the technologies may still be resisted despite their efficiency. IHRM should mandate user councils, publish fairness metrics (for example, distribution of unpopular shifts) and commit to periodic audits (BMC Nursing, 2025a; Research Square, 2025).

2.4 Reflective Report: Developing My Practice of Fair Leadership (Gibbs' Cycle)

As an International Business MBA focused on leadership and ethics, I view fairness as the most reliable currency of influence. Justice perceptions determine whether teams grant leaders authority, especially amid ambiguity. Gibbs' reflective cycle helps convert a justice lens into daily leadership habits (Gibbs, 1988).

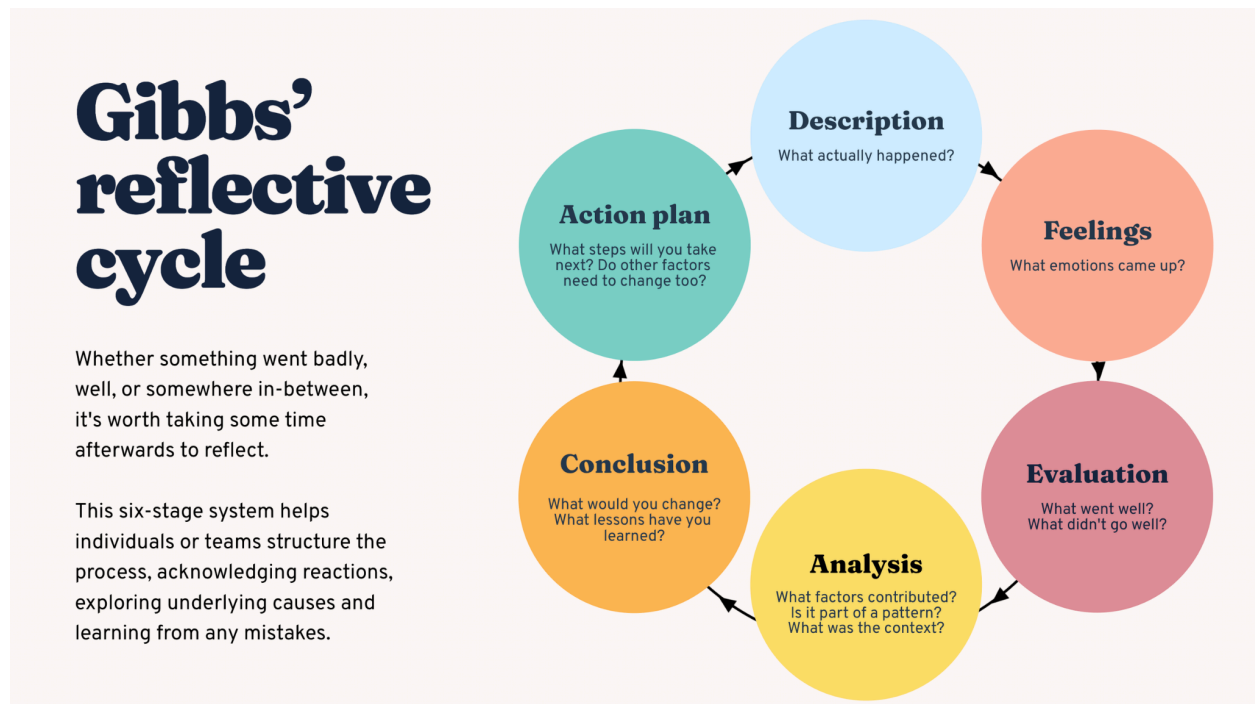


Image 1: Gibbs (1988) Reflective Cycle

2.4.1 Description.

Back in my undergraduate degree, I worked on a group project where tensions started to build around how the workload was divided. Two teammates felt they had been handed the most complicated analytical tasks without anyone asking for their input, and another teammate felt that the comments he received on his slides came across as unnecessarily harsh or dismissive.

2.4.3 Feelings.

I felt stuck in the middle—focused on meeting the deadline but increasingly uncomfortable with the sense that things weren't being handled fairly. Others were openly frustrated and some began to disengage (“Why bother if decisions are already made?”), showing how a lack of justice was affecting motivation.

2.4.4 Evaluation.

On the positive side, we did finish on time and everyone contributed during the final push. On the negative side, the way tasks were assigned wasn't transparent (procedural justice), explanations for changes came too late (informational justice) and one team member felt spoken down to (interpersonal justice). In terms of distributive fairness, the most time-intensive tasks ended up falling to just two people.

2.4.5 Analysis (Greenberg's four dimensions).



Image 2: Greenber's Four dimensions of organizational justice (Source: Greenberg, 1990)

Justice Dimension	Issue Identified
Procedural	We had no agreed criteria for allocating tasks or balancing difficulty.
Distributive	Outcomes—such as time burden and recognition—were uneven.

Informational	Rationales were unclear, and messages came through scattered chats.
Interpersonal	Speed overshadowed civility, and some corrective comments felt personal.

Table 1: Analysis of Greenber's Four dimensions of organizational justice

Research suggests such justice deficits undermine trust and engagement; the justice literature shows that clarifying procedures and communicating respectfully improves commitment and performance (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter and Ng, 2001).

2.4.6 Conclusion.

A clear, co-created process with visible criteria would likely have reduced resentment, and structured updates could have preserved informational justice. A brief “team norms” reset would have protected interpersonal justice without slowing delivery.

2.4.7 Action plan.

1. **Procedural:** Begin each project with a 20-minute scoping to set criteria (skills stretch, time limits, backup), followed by a quick vote. Publish the task matrix and add a mid-course rebalancing checkpoint.
2. **Distributive:** Track hours weekly; if variance >25%, reallocate or offer compensatory recognition (for example, presenter slots, post-project credits).
3. **Informational:** Issue twice-weekly micro-updates with decisions, rationales and anticipated impacts; archive in a single document.
4. **Interpersonal:** Adopt “BIAS” feedback (Behaviour, Impact, Alternative, Support); pair critique with an offer of help.
5. **Capability:** Enrol in an evidence-based leadership micro-course; practise facilitative leadership in the consulting club; seek a mentor to review my fairness habits against case scenarios (Gibbs, 1988).

3. Conclusion

Justice isn't some soft, sentimental ideal; it's a real driver of trust, motivation and performance—especially when everything's shifting around you. Technology only amplifies both sides of the equation: algorithms can chip away at fairness, while well-designed systems with explainability and room for participation can strengthen it. Bigger forces—changing demographics, global shocks, keep reshaping what people consider “fair,” putting IHRM right in the thick of ethical decision-making and clear communication. And in a world where talent is scarce, justice becomes strategy: fair access to development, equitable pay for hard-to-find skills and benefits that genuinely make people want to stay. Whether you look at Starbucks, tech companies or healthcare organisations, employees are essentially running a live audit of fairness every day. That's where IHRM earns its keep: embedding distributive, procedural, informational and interpersonal justice into how the organisation actually works. Not just to dodge risk, but to build the kind of social capital that keeps performance sustainable over the long haul.

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Appendix

Personal SWOT

Dimension	Strengths (evidence)	Weaknesses (risk)	Opportunities (action)	Threats (mitigation)
Distributive justice	Track workload transparently in project tools; volunteer to rebalance near deadlines	Can over-index on speed, letting task load drift	Use weekly load dashboards; offer compensatory recognition	Hidden time sinks—set work-in-progress limits; escalate early
Procedural justice	Comfortable facilitating scoping and criteria-setting	Sometimes skip explicit criteria under time pressure	Start each project with 20-minute scoping + mid-point rebalancing	Ambiguity creep—publish decision logs; time-box debates
Informational justice	Clear written updates; concise rationales	Can assume “everyone knows” context	Issue twice-weekly micro-updates; single source of truth	Info overload—use structured templates; bullets + links
Interpersonal justice	Calm tone under stress; receptive to feedback	Brevity can sound brusque in text	Adopt BIAS feedback model; pair critique with help	Remote misinterpretation—prefer video for sensitive topics