EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF THE INFLUENCE OF DIVERSITY DIMENSIONS ON CO-WORKER INTERACTIONS AND DAILY ORGANIZATIONAL OPERATIONS

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Abstract

This study assesses employee perceptions of the influence of diversity dimensions (race, gender, religion, language, sexual orientation, attitudes, values, work experience, physical ability, economic status, personality) on their interactiions with co-workers as well as on their organization in its daily operations. These perceptions were also compared and gender related correlates were assessed. The study was undertaken in a public sector Electricity Department in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The population includes 100 employees in the organization, from which a sample of 81 was drawn using simple random sampling. Data was collected using a self-developed, pre-coded, self-administered questionnaire whose reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings reflect that employees perceive that their interactions with co-workers are most likely to be influenced by attitudes, work experience and personality and that daily organizational operations are most likely to be influenced by race, work experience and attitudes. Furthermore, religion and sexual orientation are perceived as having the least influence on co-worker interaction and day-to-day organizational operations. In the study it was also found that employees perceive that race followed by gender influences day-to-day organizational operations to a larger extent than it influences co-worker interactions. Recommendations made have the potential to enhance the management of workforce diversity.

Keywords: Interactions with Co-Workers, Diversity Dimensions, Attitudes, Race, Personality, Work Experience, Principle of Inclusiveness

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Introduction

In recent times the concept of workforce diversity has become an important variable of interest to researchers (Cox, 1994; Allison, 1999; Kirton & Greene, 2000) especially because workplaces can be rather diverse in terms of race, gender, sexual orientations, personalities, attitudes and values, amongst others. According to Allison (1999), issues of diversity should not be separated from basic management principles. The application of management principles assists in maintaining the integrity of diversity and fairness on a long term basis. Considerable attention has been paid to discussions on the importance of workplace diversity together with efforts to propose models, guidelines and training modules to facilitate diversity training (Allison, 1999).

Diversity has to be recognized as an imperative strategic route that businesses have to take in order to survive (Bryan, 2000/2001; Carrell, Elbert, Hatfield,

Grobler, Marx and Van der Schyf, 1998). Researchers such as Cox (1994) and Kirton and Greene (2000) contend that this forward thinking has much to do with future trends which predict that the composition of the workforce will be of people who are essentially different on various levels.

World population statistics reveal that the existing labour force of traditional industrial powers cannot be replaced if one examines the fertility rate of those countries. To replace lost labour or even to add to the existing numbers, has to come from immigration or from increasing the participation of minority groups (Cox, 1994). Increased mobility and the interaction of people from diverse backgrounds, as a result of improved economic and political structures as well as the equal opportunity framework, have forced organizations to embrace workplace diversity (Henry, and Evans, 2007). These trends dictate the impracticality of organizations who hang on to the notion of acquiring and retaining a homogenous workforce (Gudmundson & Hartenian, 2000). What is

inevitable is a workplace that is more diverse and the need to utilize this trend positively is vital if organizations are to cultivate success and remain globally competitive. A homogenous workforce can be detrimental to an organization in various ways. These include implications for "long term growth, renewal, and the ability to respond to important environmental changes such as dynamic market conditions, new technologies and ideas, societal shifts, or the changing expectations of the work force" (Kossek & Lobel, 1996, p. 3). An organization that embraces diversity can aid the culture to adapt to the environmental demands. The aim is to attract, select, motivate, develop and retain a diverse workforce that is skilled enough to successfully work through changes.

Understanding Diversity and Diversity Dimensions

Research identifies two perspectives on workplace diversity: functionalist perspectives and critical perspectives (Cox, 1994; Allison, 1999). This study is based on the former which focusses on workplace diversity in terms of controlling the negative and positive aspects of diversity. This alludes to an organizational effectiveness model where the aim is to enhance organizational productivity, responsiveness and effectiveness (Cox, 1994; Allison, 1999).

A traditional definition of diversity merely focusses on increasing the number of women and minorities in an organization. In fact, many organizations are guilty of simply complying with legal requirements or are just responding to a shift in the labour market resources (Pitts & Wise, 2010; Pless & Maak, 2004) whilst failing to engage in valuing, developing and effectively utilizing diversity (Shen, Chanda, D'Netto & Monga, 2009). Diversity introduces various challenges to organizations. One such challenge is that people are recognizing that enhancing diversity requires organizations to change to the extent of amending current regulations and advocating the sharing of power and decision-making (Ansari & Jackson, 1995). Ansari and Jackson (1995) further advocate that diversity extends beyond treating everyone the same, to recognizing differences and the fact that groups of people have been largely ignored in the workplace. For organizations to adopt a diverse approach means valuing differences and treating people in ways which bring out the best in them (Wise & Tschirhart, 2000).

Diversity refers to differences in "age, ethnic heritage, gender, physical ability and qualities, religious belief and sexual/affectional orientation" (Arai, Wance-Thibault & Shockley-Zalabak, 2001, p. 445). This is a broad definition of the term and is similar to one proposed by Thomas (1996), which adds that diversity in its fullest sense involves a broad range of factors. Similarly, Wise and Tschirhart (2000) advocate a definition by Cox which

conceptualizes diversity as the collective (all-inclusive) mixture of human differences and similarities along a given dimension. These dimensions include "race, culture, religion, gender, sexual preference, age, profession, organization team tenure, personality type, functional background, education level, political party, and other demographic, socioeconomic and psychographic characteristics" (Wise & Tshirhart, 2000, p. 2). Workplace diversity includes identifying those individuals who share these common traits which can either unite or divide people. Human (1996), cited in Carrell et al. (1998, p. 50), differentiates workplace diversity on three levels:

- The politically correct term for equal employment opportunity/affirmative action (a narrow view of diversity)
- The recruitment and selection of ethnic groups and women (most organizations tend to focus on this aspect of regulating their workforce numbers)
- The management of individuals sharing a broad range of common traits (a broad perspective on workplace diversity programs).

Lippman (2000, p. 25) defines a diverse workplace as a place where:

- Minorities, women and the disabled have positions at every level.
- People are allowed, even encouraged, to be who they are rather than having to dress, behave and express themselves in a lockstep.
- Barriers to advancement have been torn down to continue to be searched and attacked.
- All employees have the opportunity for personal growth and the room to reach their full potential.

Research studies focus on redefining diversity and paying close attention to the difference(s) between psychological and covert factors or deep-level diversity (personality, attitudes, beliefs and values) and visible, surface-level diversity (demographic and physical characteristics such as age, gender and race) (Barsade, Ward, Turner, Sonnenfeld, 2000; Harrison, Price & Bell, 1998; Knouse & Dansby, 1999; Pitts & Wise, 2010; Saji, 2004; Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 2000).

It is apparent that there are several dimensions to understanding exactly what diversity it. Clearly though, what is needed is a radical change in one's traditional idea of what diversity is and a move towards an amalgamation of different approaches.

Implications of a Diverse Workforce And Perceived Benefits

Having a diverse workforce demands effective diversity management. In other words, there is a need to systematically manage a heterogeneous workforce in a fair and equitable environment where no individual has an advantage or disadvantage and all employees are able to perform optimally. This means

that for organizational success to be attained, effective diversity management practices relating to recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management and pay must be formulated and implemented as a norm rather than an exception (Lawrence, 2001). A heterogeneous workforce has innovative and creative potential that can be utilized to eliminate cultural boundaries, formulate perspectives and solutions to organizational problems, and generate innovative product ideas and market opportunity initiatives (Pitts & Wise, 2009; Pless & Maak, 2004). Hence, diversity in the workplace can be a competitive advantage because enhanced creativity and innovation can lead to better organizational performance (Allen, Dawson, Wheatley & White, 2004) and a diverse workforce can provide superior services due to enhanced understanding of customers' needs (Wentling & PalmaRivas, 2000), thereby reflecting that diversity can result in economic benefit and organizational effectiveness (Ferley, Hartley & Martin, 2003). Therefore, organizations that demonstrate experience in managing diversity are more likely to attract the best personnel (Carrell, et al., 1998), thereby aligning with Von Bergen, Soper and Parnell's (2005) view that diversity can influence performance and performance can influence diversity. However, a study undertaken by D'Netto and Sohal (1999) in Australia found that the management of workforce diversity was only 'mediocre' especially in the areas of recruitment and selection and training and development. In addition, Allen et al. (2004) maintain that only a small percentage of companies tie manager's rewards or compensation to the achievement of diversity goals. Pless and Maak (2004) advocate the need for an integrative approach to diversity and emphasize the importance of creating more inclusive work environments where people from diverse backgrounds feel respected and recognized, have mutual understanding, trust and integrity, whilst taking cognisance of norms and values. The principle of inclusiveness fosters greater employee integration, human diversity and the cohesion of multiple voices into the organizational dialogue (Pless & Maak, 2004). At the realm, of employee integration lie the issue of effective co-worker interaction and organizational practices that promote inclusivity.

Aims of the Study

This study assesses employee perceptions of the influence of diversity dimensions (race, gender, religion, language, sexual orientation, attitudes, values, work experience, physical ability, economic status, personality) on their interactions with co-workers as well as on their organization in its daily operations. These perceptions were also compared and gender related correlates were assessed.

Research Design

Respondents

The study was undertaken in a public sector Electricity Department in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The population includes 100 employees in the organization, from which a sample of 81 was drawn using simple random sampling. According to Sekaran's (2003) population-to-sample size table, a corresponding minimum sample of 80 was needed, thereby confirming the adequacy of the sample of 81 employees.

In terms of the composition of the sample, there were more males (59.3%) than females (40.7%). The majority of the sample were from 26-40 years (64.3%) with 27.2% being from 26-30 years, 17.3% being from 31-35 years and 19.8% being from 36-40 years. The majority of the sample is English speaking (69.1%), followed by those who are Zulu (29.6%) and North Sotho (1.3%) speaking. In terms of tenure, the majority of the employees have between 1-15 years of service (81.5%) with 29.6% of the employees having 1-5 years of service, 28.4% having 6-10 years and 23.5% having 11-15 years of tenure. Furthermore, 51.9% of the participants are Indian, followed by Black (30.9%), White (11.1%) and then Coloured (6.1%). Whilst, 69.1% are general staff, 28.4% comprise of technical specialists and 2.5% are from middle management.

Measuring Instrument

Data was collected using a self-developed, pre-coded, self-administered questionnaire consisting of two sections. Section A relate to biographical (gender, age, language, tenure, race, occupational level) and was assessed using the nominal scale with precoded option categories. Section B tapped into perceptions of the diversity dimensions that influence them when interacting with co-workers as well as the diversity dimensions that influence their organization in its operations. The diversity dimensions assessed included race, gender, religion, language, sexual orientation, attitudes, values, work experiences, physical ability, economic status and personality. Section B was measured using the Likert Scale ranging from strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), agree (4) to strongly agree (5). The questionnaire was formulated on the basis of identifying recurring themes that surfaced while conducting the literature review. These ensured face and content validity. Furthermore, in-house pretesting was adopted to assess the suitability of the instruments. Pilot testing was also carried out on 8 employees using the same protocols that were utilized for the larger study to test the process, the appropriateness of questions and employees' understanding thereof. No inadequacies were reported

and the final questionnaire was considered appropriate in terms of relevance and construction.

Research procedure

The research was only conducted after ethical clearance was obtained for the study and upon completion of the pilot study.

Reliability of the questionnaire

The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha. The items were reflected as having a high level of internal consistency and reliability, with the Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha for the items measuring the perceptions of employees of the diversity areas influencing their interaction with co-workers and that of the organization as being 0.8196.

Statistical analysis of the data

Descriptive statistics (mean, mode, standard deviation, minimum, maximum) and inferential statistics (chi-square correlation: Likelihood ratio) were used to evaluate the objectives and hypotheses of the study.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Employees' perceptions of the diversity dimensions influencing them when interacting with co-workers were assessed using a 1-5 point Likert scale. The higher the mean score value, the more employees perceive the diversity area to influence their interactions with others (Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics – Employees' perceptions of the diversity dimensions influencing them when interacting with co-workers

Diversity Dimensions	Mean	Mode	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Race	2.6	1	1.5	1	5
Gender	1.8	1	1.1	1	5
Religion	1.7	1	1.2	1	5
Language	2.6	2	1.5	1	5
Sexual orientation	1.7	1	1.0	1	5
Attitudes	3.1	2	1.3	1	5
Values	2.7	2	1.2	1	5
Work experience	3.0	2	1.3	1	5
Physical ability	2.0	1	1.2	1	5
Economic status	1.8	1	1.1	1	5
Personality	2.9	3	1.3	1	5

Table 1 indicates that when employees interact with each other they are influenced, in descending level based on mean score values, by:
- Attitudes (Mean = 3.1)
- Work experience (Mean = 3.0)
- Personality (Mean = 2.9)
- Values (Mean = 2.7)
- Race and Language (Mean = 2.6)
- Physical ability (Mean = 2.0)
- Gender and Economic status (Mean = 1.8)
- Religion and Sexual orientation (Mean = 1.7)

Evidently, employees perceive that their interactions with co-workers are predominantly influenced by attitudes, work experience and personality. The mode of 3 for Personality shows that a significant segment of employees perceive that their interactions with co-workers are largely influenced by this diversity dimension. Furthermore, Interactions with co-workers is least likely to be influenced by religion and sexual orientation.

Employees' perceptions of the diversity dimensions influencing their organization on a daily basis were evaluated using a 1-5 point Likert scale. The higher the mean score value, the more employees perceive the diversity area to influence their organization in its daily operations (Table 2).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics – Employees' perceptions of the diversity dimensions influencing their organization in its daily operations

Diversity Dimension	Mean	Mode	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Race	3.8	5	1.4	1	5
Gender	2.5	2	1.3	1	5
Religion	1.7	1	1.0	1	5
Language	2.9	2	1.5	1	5
Sexual orientation	1.8	1	1.2	1	5
Attitudes	3.1	4	1.3	1	5
Values	2.7	2	1.3	1	5
Work experience	3.2	4	1.3	1	5
Physical ability	2.2	2	1.2	1	5
Economic status	2.0	1	1.2	1	5
Personality	2.7	2	1.2	1	5

Table 2 indicates that employees perceive their organizations in their daily operations to be influenced, in descending level based on mean score values, by:

- Race (Mean = 3.8)
- Work experience (Mean = 3.2)
- Attitudes (Mean = 3.1)
- Language (Mean = 2.9)
- Values and Personality (Mean = 2.7)
- Gender (Mean = 2.5)
- Physical ability (Mean = 2.2)
- Economic status (Mean = 2.0)
- Sexual orientation (Mean = 1.8)
- Religion (Mean = 1.7)

Evidently, employees perceive that their organization in its daily operations is predominantly influenced by race, work experience and attitudes. The mode of 5 for Gender and 4 for Attitudes and Work Experience shows that a significant segment of employees perceive that their organization in its daily operations are largely influenced by these three diversity areas. Furthermore, employees perceive that their organization in its daily operations is least likely to be influenced by religion, followed by sexual orientation.

Employees' perceptions of the influence of the diversity dimensions on their interactions with co-workers and on their organization in its daily operations were compared (Figure 1).
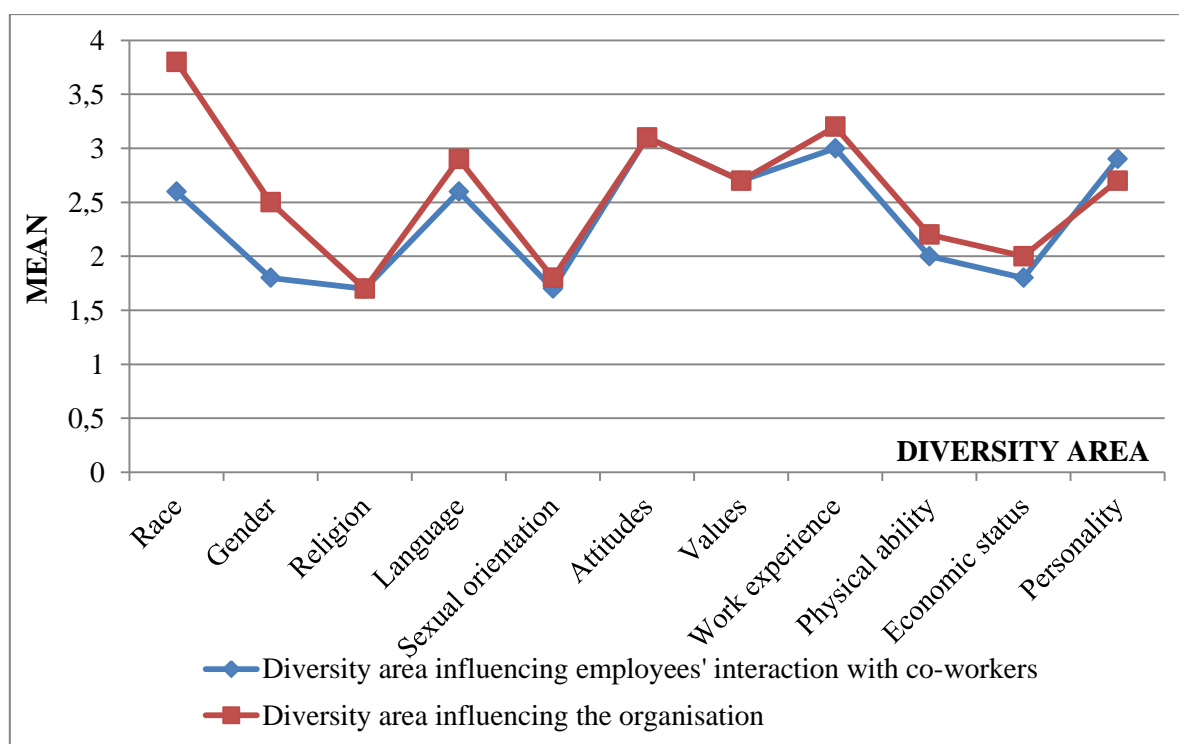
Figure 1. Comparison of employees' perceptions of the influence of diversity dimensions on their interactions with co-workers and on the organization in its daily operations

Figure 1 reflects that:

a) Significant differences were noted in employee perceptions of the influence of race and gender on their own interaction with co-workers and their organization's daily operations.

b) Negligible differences were noted in employee perceptions of the influence of language, work experience, physical ability, economic status, personality and sexual orientation on their own interaction and on their organization's daily operations.

c) No differences were noted in employee perceptions of the influence of religion, attitudes and values on their own interaction and on their organization's daily operations.

Evidently, the gap between the perceived differences on the influence of the dimensions on co-worker interactions and day-to-day organizational operations is the greatest for race followed by gender. Employees perceive that race followed by gender influences day-to-day organizational operations to a larger extent than it influences co-worker interactions.

Inferential statistics

Influence of Biographical data

The influence of gender (male, female) on employees' perceptions of the influence of the diversity dimensions on their interactions with co-workers and, on the organization in its daily operations were assessed using chi-square correction (Likelihood ration).

H1: There is a significant relationship between gender (male, female) and employees' perceptions of the influence of the diversity dimensions (race, gender, religion, language, sexual orientation, attitudes, values, work experience, physical ability, economic status, personality) on their interactions with co-workers respectively (Table 3).

Table 3. Correlation (Likelihood ratio) between gender and employees' perceptions of diversity dimensions influencing their interactions with co-workers

Diversity Dimension	Likelihood ratio Value	Df	p
Race	3.806	4	0.433
Gender	12.103	4	0.017*
Religion	6.205	4	0.184
Language	4.570	4	0.334
Sexual orientation	6.092	4	0.192
Attitudes	1.955	4	0.744
Values	7.669	4	0.104
Work experience	2.835	4	0.586
Physical ability	2.051	4	0.726
Economic status	5.404	4	0.248
Personality	2.681	4	0.613

*p < 0.05

Table 3 indicates that there is no significant relationship between gender (male, females) and employees' perceptions of the influence of the respective diversity areas (race, religion, language, sexual orientation, attitudes, values, work experience, physical ability, economic status, personality) on their interactions with co-workers. However, Table 3 reflects that there is a significant relationship between gender (male, female) and the perceptions of employees that gender does influence their interactions with co-workers at the 5% level of significance. In this regard, frequency analyses reflect that more females (87.5%) than males (77.1%) agree that gender influences their interactions with co-workers. Evidently, a significant percentage of both male and female employees are influenced by gender when interacting with co-workers.

H2: There is a significant relationship between gender (male, female) and employees' perceptions of the influence of the diversity dimensions (race, gender, religion, language, sexual orientation, attitudes, values, work experience, physical ability, economic status, personality) on their organization in its daily operations respectively (Table 4).

Table 4. Correlation (Likelihood ratio) between gender and employees' perceptions of the diversity dimensions influencing their organizations in its daily operations

Diversity Dimension	Likelihood ratio Value	Df	p
Race	3.317	4	0.506
Gender	7.036	4	0.134
Religion	2.198	4	0.699
Language	7.116	4	0.130
Sexual orientation	7.012	4	0.135
Attitudes	1.339	4	0.855
Values	9.686	4	0.046*
Work experience	5.155	4	0.272
Physical ability	8.438	4	0.077
Economic status	4.077	4	0.396
Personality	1.709	4	0.789

*$p < 0.05$

Table 4 indicates that there is no significant relationship between gender (male, females) and employees' perceptions of the influence of the respective diversity areas (race, gender, religion, language, sexual orientation, attitudes, work experience, physical ability, economic status, personality) on their organization in its daily operations. However, Table 4 reflects that there is a significant relationship between gender (male, female) and the perceptions of employees that values do influence their organization and its daily operations at the 5 % level of significance. In this regard, frequency analyses reflect that significantly more males (62.5%) than females (35.5%) agree that gender influences their organization in its daily operations.

Discussion of Results

Employees reflect that their interactions with co-workers are most likely to be influenced by attitudes, work experience and personality and are least likely to be influenced by religion and sexual orientation respectively. The perceived influence of personality on interactions with co-workers is particularly significant since Dougherty, Cheung and Florea (2008) noted that personality influences one's social network and developmental network structures, Yang, Gong and Huo (2011) found that individuals high on proactivity are more likely to engage in helping behaviour and Niehoff (2006) found that participation as a mentor is likely to be influenced by personality. Likewise, it was found in this study that employees perceive their organizations in their daily operations to be influenced the most by race, work experience and attitudes and least by sexual orientation and religion respectively. Regarding the influence of race, Weeks, Weeks and Frost (2007) found a significant interaction between race and social class when predicting the percentage of pay increase given to employees and Gardner and Deadrick (2012) noted that race moderated the validity of cognitive ability in predicting performance. Perhaps, work experience is

perceived as having an influence on co-worker interactions and daily organizational operations because work experience influences self-improvement and professionalism (Chinomona & Surujlal, 2012; Hewlett, 2006). Regarding the influence on attitudes on daily organizational operations, Edgar and Geare (2005) found that a significant relationship exists between human resource management practice and employee work-related attitudes. It was also noted that whilst personality was perceived as influencing co-worker interaction it was not viewed as having the potential to strongly influence day-to-day organizational operations. This finding is contrary to that of researchers who found that (1) personality and in particular conscientiousness influences organizational effectiveness (Barbuto, Phipps & Xu, 2010), (2) personality and in particular agreeableness influences job performance (Yang and Hwang, 2014), (3) altruistic employees (those who enjoy helping others) received higher advancement potential ratings and greater reward recommendations and (4) personality influences work involvement, though not strongly or extensively (Bozionelos, 2004).

In this study, it was also noted that religion and sexual orientation had the least influence on co-worker interaction and daily organizational operations. The limited influence of sexual orientation may be due to the fact that since 1980, 12 states have passed legislation banning employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and this philosophy might be permeating throughout many organizations (Human Rights Campaign, 2007) or perhaps, because there is greater willingness by employees to publicly make their gay or lesbian orientation known (Griffith & Hebl, 2002). However, a study undertaken by Fernando and Jackson (2006) found that religion plays a significant role in influencing the judgment, emotion and motivational qualities of Sri Lankan leaders' decision-making.

Furthermore, in this study it was found that the gap between the perceived differences on the influence of the dimensions on co-worker interactions

and day-to-day organizational operations is the greatest for race followed by gender. In other words, employees perceive that race followed by gender influences day-to-day organizational operations to a larger extent than it influences co-worker interactions. In line with the influence of race and gender on organizational operations, Fortune magazine reported that people of colour constituted only 19% of corporate board rooms and 26% of management in the Fortune 1000 and the largest privately owned companies (Hickman, Tkaczyk, Florian & Stemple, 2003) and that in 2006 only 2% of Chief Executive Officers in the Fortune 1000 were women (CNN, 2007), thereby keeping the glass ceiling that prevents women rising in the workplace firmly in place (Human Resource Management International Digest, 2006). Instead of simply assessing the number of women in management, Mensi-Klarbach (2014) proposes assessing gender diversity in top management based on four layers of gender relevant moderators, namely, societal, organizational, top management team and the individual layer. In terms of the influence of gender on co-worker interactions, Leo, Reid, Geldenhys & Govind (2014) emphasize the prevalence of bullying amongst South African employees, and particularly women, in the workplace. However, Richard, McMillan, Chadwick and Dwyer (2003) found that racial diversity resulted in better bank performance when innovation was a core part of the organization's strategy, but jeopardized performance when innovation was not emphasized. Furthermore, Pitts (2009) found that diversity management programs can enhance job satisfaction and perceptions of performance among people of colour.

The influence of gender on employee perceptions of the influence of the diversity dimensions on co-worker interaction and daily organizational operations were also assessed. With regard to the former, it was found that there is a significant relationship between gender (male, female) and the perceptions of employees that gender does influence their interactions with co-workers at the 5% level of significance, with more females (87.5%) feeling in this way than males (77.1%). Evidently, a significant percentage of both male and female employees are influenced by gender when interacting with co-workers.

With regard to the influence of gender on employee perceptions of the influence of the diversity dimensions (race, gender, religion, language, sexual orientation, attitudes, values, work experience, physical ability, economic status, personality) on daily organizational operations, it was found that there is a significant relationship between gender (male, female) and the perceptions of employees that values do influence their organization and its daily operations at the 5 % level of significance, with more males (62.5%) feeling so than females (35.5%). Dean (2008) emphasizes that values are the essence of who

we are and influence every facet of our being especially in terms of our motivations, the relationships we build, the organizations we lead as well as our actions and decisions.

The results also indicate that language, physical ability and economic status respectively are perceived by employees as having less influence on co-worker interactions and daily organizational operations. Perhaps, the influence of language on co-worker interactions is clouded since more people are becoming linguistically diverse, for example, 18% of all households in the United States use a language other than English (Rubaii-Barrett & Wise, 2007), multilingualism is encouraged in the South African Police Services (SAPS) in the Western Cape in South Africa (Dyers & George, 2007) and multilingual models of education and language policies are proposed across African populations (Banda, 2009).

Recommendations and Conclusion

The findings reflect that employees perceive that their interactions with co-workers are most likely to be influenced by attitudes, work experience and personality and that daily organizational operations are most likely to be influenced by race, work experience and attitudes. The perceived influence of attitudes, work experience and personality has obvious implications for the human resource practices of recruitment and selection. It is, therefore, recommended to recruit and select individuals whose attitudes and personality are congruent with the culture of the organization and whose work experience fits the job. This will enable the new incumbent to fit into the culture of the organization quicker and better and reach optimal performance within a shorter pace of time. The perceived influence of race on daily organizational operations may be due to race sensitivity particularly that the study is undertaken in South Africa, a country that endured the ills of apartheid. Perhaps, the influence of race on organizational operations is perceived as organizations, whilst complying with legal requirements, may be lagging behind in effectively managing workplace diversity. In the study it was also found that employees perceive that race followed by gender influences day-to-day organizational operations to a larger extent than it influences co-worker interactions. It is, therefore, recommended that organizations create more inclusive work environments where people from diverse backgrounds feel respected and recognized, have mutual understanding and, trust and integrity. The principle of inclusiveness fosters greater employee integration and the cohesion of numerous voices into the organizational dialogue that contributes to attaining organizational effectiveness.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study assesses employee perceptions of the influence of diversity dimensions on co-worker interactions and daily organizational operations. It does not assess the extent to which organizations are engaging in human resource practices that foster more inclusive work environments in managing workforce diversity. Organizations will benefit if future studies focus on the principle of inclusiveness as it has the potential to impact positively on organizational effectiveness.

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