

ENGAGING DIVERSE RELIGIONS AT WORK

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ABSTRACT

The majority of work engagement studies have been conducted using a quantitative approach with limited attention to the institutional and social contexts. Meanwhile, the role of religion in shaping people's philosophy and behaviour in life and work has been gaining attention from management researchers. The present paper is an explorative paper which focuses on the changing workplace diversity and coping strategies. This paper responds to calls for more focus on contexts and for deeper qualitative investigations into individual dynamics that concern religiosity and work engagement. It provides evidence that religiosity plays an important role in work engagement. Our findings have implications for people management in organizations that have a diverse workforce representing multiple religions.

KEYWORDS: Work engagement, religion, diverse workplace, inclusivity, globalization, homogenous organizations, heterogenous organizations.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization is rapidly transforming the demographic mixture of employees in organizations across countries. Therefore, the idea of diversity and its management become imperative. Diversity management (DM) is designing and implementing corporate systems and practices to manage employees in a way the potential blessings of diversity are maximized and its potential disadvantages are reduced (Cox, 1993). The term originated in North America within the late 1980's and since then it seeped into countries across the globe (Kaiser & Prange, 2004; Nyambegera, 2002; Ozbilgin & Tatli, 2008; linksman, 2003; Pattnaik & Tripathy, 2014). DM started as an idea to supply equal employment opportunities and these days it translated into an accepted corporate policy on diversity. It refers to a combination of individuals with completely different cluster of identities within the same societal system (Fluery, 1999). Diversity includes factors like race, gender, age, colour, religion, physical incapacity, and ethnicity (Kundu & Turan, 1999). In this chapter, the author will focus only on managing people with diverse religion in workplace.

Throughout the year, employees may want time off to observe certain holy days rather than conforming to the employer's holiday schedule, request breaks to pray, or seek an exemption from an employer's dress or grooming standards so that they may express themselves consistent with their religious beliefs. While employers do not question most requests, what should an employer do if it suspects that the requested accommodation is being made to upset a co-worker or that an employee is requesting certain days off to go shopping or take a long weekend? Any discrimination against people in the organization or hiring people for the organization is illegal organizations are expected to introduce reasonable 'bona fide beliefs related to religion. A 'bona fide religious belief means that the individual has a religious and sincerely held belief or practice. Religious beliefs don't need to be part of organized religion, and moral or ethical beliefs as to what is right or wrong could constitute religious beliefs. Employers may not refuse to accommodate an employee or applicants sincerely held religious beliefs or practices unless accommodating them would impose an undue hardship. Some examples of accommodations that an employer would have to provide, absent undue hardship, include excusing a Hindu coming to the office with Dhoti-Kurta (Indian traditional religious dress) in festivals or permitting a Muslim employee to take a break schedule that will permit daily prayers at prescribed times.

PARADIGMS OF RELIGION

Organizations scrutinize faith from completely different paradigms, that successively form certain beliefs on diversity. The ethical paradigm has belief where any kind of discrimination is immoral, incorrect, and illegal (for example discrimination with regard to caste, religion and race). On one side, social paradigm has a belief that our solutions to various faith for a rustic or region should be completely diverge and distinctive from the remainder (for example the requirements of individuals with different religions in a firm or a way to bring the minority group into the main workgroup). The paradigm of competitive advantage has a belief that a competitive reasoning is present behind the idea of a policy having inclusiveness and diversity. As an example, Mckinsey (2014) reported that firms within the top quartile for non-secular diversity may get monetary returns higher than their national trade medians. In the same dimensions, Firms at the bottom quartile may statistically earn less than above-average returns. Diversity therefore could be a competitive unique variable for firm.

ORGANIZATION & DIVERSITY POLICIES

Cox (1994; 2001) divides organizations in to a few types: the monolithic organization, the plural organization, and multi-cultural organization and presents a diversity management paradigm for every kind. they're as follows:

The monolithic is demographically and culturally consistent. as an example, most Chinese firms, from religious perspective, are monolithic. (Powell & Graves, 2003). A monolithic organization in North America or Europe can have a majority of Christian men and comparatively few ladies and members of minorities in terms of religion (Cox, 1994; 2001). Similarly, in India the majority organizations can have primarily Hindus as staff. Such organizations can have a culture which will continue the homogeneity of its employees through its hiring and promotion practices.

The plural organization contains a heterogeneous mix of employees, relative to the monolithic organization, and generally makes efforts to evolve to laws and public policies that demand and expect organizational equality. it'll take active steps to stop discrimination within the employees in an organization, like the audits that assures equality of compensation systems and manager trainings on equality grounds. Although female and members of minority teams constitute a large number, only tiny percentage represent management, especially top-level management, and are still expected to integrate into the culture belonging to majority. Samples of plural organizations embrace corporations within which members of minority teams represent a large proportion of the corporate workforce but tiny percentage in top-level managerial positions. Most Indian organizations are attempting to become plural through policies of religious reservation, second careers for women and work life balance.

The multicultural organization has a characteristic of supporting differences in cultures. This meant that all corporate employees are equally and truly included as a process of acculturation via pluralism. It is rather a more idealistic situation than a real one as firms very rarely realize such an integration. However, Cox (1994; 2001) indicate that it is important to understand this type and use it to create a vision for effective diversity management.

DIVERSITY IN A GLOBALIZED ENVIRONMENT

Along with the above classifications, in a globalizing economy diversity can also be understood as cross national and intra national. DM through cross national is an idea where employees comprise people from different countries whereas DM through intra national is a concept where citizens and immigrants of a single organizational context are managed. Each of these types of diversity management presents different challenges and dilemmas, and each requires a distinct set of policies and programs.

HOMOGENOUS & HETEROGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS

Conventional human resource (HR) practices tend to supply and uphold homogeneity within the manpower due to the A-S-A (attraction-selection-attribution) cycle (Schneider, 1987; Schneider, Smith & Paul, 2001). Typically, people are interested in organizations that seem to own members with

values just like their own. In turn, organizations choose those new members who display characteristics like their existing members as a result of their hiring, which continues to create everybody feel relaxed (García, Posthuma, & Colella, 2008). Hiring practices usually emphasize hiring individuals from sources that have traditionally been reliable and choosing candidates who display characteristics just like those successful staff. As a result, most employees end up belonging to the same religion and employees who do not fit in well with the dominant employee force, belonging to one religion, ultimately leave or are sacked. This kind of environment would create a selective attrition process that would support and maintain a group of employees which is homogeneous (Schneider, Smith & Paul, 2001). In the long run, such scenario would prove costly for firm as the talent pool created would have limited skills, in turn denting their aspiration of growth and taping new markets which would need high level of adaptation skills. HR managers, in recent times, have realized the power of inculcating DM practices which would help them solve problems arising due to diversity and succeed by the positive rewards of a diverse set of talent pool. Kossek and Lobel (1996) summarized the prevailing HR approaches in diversity management and offered one of their own approach. Further, the authors expanded the model by proposing relationships of HR practices with diversity management and organizational, group and individuals consequences (Kossek, Lobel & Brown, 2006). The four approaches are:

Diversity enlargement: This approach focuses on increasing the representation of individuals of different religious backgrounds in the organization. The goal is to change the organizational culture by changing the religious composition of the workforce. The assumption is that the new employees will conform to existing practices and that no additional intervention will be needed. The mere presence of increasing numbers of employees from different religions will result in a culture change that will bring the desired results. Often this approach is motivated by compliance to laws and public expectations of political correctness rather than a deep understanding of the business need for diversity (Kossek & Lobel, 1996). For example, the reservation policy on caste lines in India.

Diversity sensitivity: This approach acknowledges the potential difficulties introduced by hiring people from various religious backgrounds within the same organizational structure. It tries to beat these difficulties through diversity coaching that's aimed toward sensitizing workers to stereotyping and discrimination whereas conjointly promoting communication collaboration and structural faith. The belief embedded during this approach is that enlarged sensitivity to variations can improve performance. Though this can be typically the case, in alternative instances, significantly once the coaching isn't connected to company goals and initiatives and not supported by its long-run policies, it will produce a lot of hurt than smart. Accentuation variations will backfire by reinforcing

stereotypes and highlight intergroup variations instead of refining communication through understanding and customary interests (Kossek & Lobel, 1996).

Cultural audit: This approach aims at finding the distinctive obstacles that limit the progress of workers from various religious backgrounds which block collaboration among teams within the organization. The audit is typically performed by outside consultants by getting information from surveys and focus teams. They then find the reasons within which workgroup who are totally different from the dominant cluster feel that they're blocked from giving their best. Though this can be a tailored approach that's customized to specific corporate cultures, the recommendations for amendment are generally supported by the notion that the root cause of the problem is within the dominant cultural workgroup (typically, in North America, white Christian male) and the solution should be decided within that group or cluster (Kossek & Lobel, 1996). Cultural audit, for example, in an organization can be the global satisfaction survey for employees with a dimension on diversity based on religion. The findings help assess commitment and performance in achieving work force diversity (Ford Motor Company, 2002).

Strategy for achieving organizational outcome posited by Kossek and Lobel (1996) can be used as a comprehensive framework for workforce diversity management which focuses on diversity management as a way for achieving corporate goals. Managers can use this strategy, to establish the link between diversity management objectives and desired individual and corporate outcomes. strategic decisions of an organization is viewed within the context of environmental drivers like the ever-changing labour market composition, the world economy, the shift to a service economy, and therefore the legal and governmental pressures. Analysing environmental drivers will facilitate the organization to recognize what it expects to achieve from its diversity management and the way those strategies are connected to its overall business strategy. As an example, if innovation may be a business strategy for the corporate, it's in its best interest to cultivate multi-religious competitive groups as a result of power and responsiveness to new markets, primarily in today's world economy, as diverse work teams is the only solution to be innovative in the market. In a nut shell, all these diversity management initiatives might be seen on a continuum, initializing from legislation of equal employment opportunity (EEO) which is, discrimination is illegal for which the firms have right to take stringent actions on defaulters to ensure heterogenous and diverse set of employees. The emphasis is in the hope of having competitive business advantage a organization can have on others.

DIVERSITY CHALLENGES IN INDIA

India is one of the beneficiaries of the globalization process. (Budhwar, 2003). Since more and more multinational companies (MNCs) have started their operations in India, they want to know the

peculiarities and idiosyncrasies of the Indian workforce and how it could be motivated to contribute its best to the organizational goals. Currently, diversity management in India is at the stage of providing equal opportunity. The Indian organizations fall under plural organizations (Cox, 1994, 2001) and the approach to handle diversity issues fall under diversity enlargement strategy (Kossek & Lobel, 1996). Here too, the gap between the legal promise and actual implementation is very wide. The Constitution safeguards the civil rights of the lower castes, scheduled castes (SCs) and scheduled tribes (STs) and also provides for reservations of government jobs for them by way of quota. But a lot needs to be accomplished. The people from religious minority experience various forms of unfavourable discrimination from society, employers and superiors. The country has enacted some laws so as to protect civil rights of the vulnerable sections of society, but there is no law to proactively manage diversity at the workplace. However just as every cloud has a silver lining, so with the rise in literacy levels the position of people belonging to religious minority in many spheres is becoming better. For example, Minority group are playing a significant role in the expansion of the Indian software industry, Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry and education. Multinational corporations have started forming diversity committees to drive home the philosophy of diversity management and have set benchmarks towards achieving the stated objectives (Budhwar, Saini & Bhatnagar, 2004). At the same time, it is also clear that organizations will not reap the benefit from diversity management till there is supportive environment within the organizations which is inclusive towards minority employees.

CONCLUSION

Diversity is seen mainly as a competitive advantage that would enable companies to have more market share over a long-term. This clearly indicates the necessity of having diversity supporting policies and practices. It is a win –win situation for creating an inclusive culture, more appropriately one organizational religion, and for maximizing profit. The firms who act insensitively with their minority workforce might have workforce with less job efficiency. Therefore, in any assigned work or team, the engagement of such employees might not be full. For example, an employee may fear that their religious orientation, if revealed will face reprisals. The negative effects of such type of ‘closed’ environment could significantly impact the involvement of employees in any firm and will give rise to increase in absenteeism, low morale of staff, difficulties in retention and reduced productivity. Open, effective communication, as well as clear channels for feedback optimizes the opportunity for discussion of issues related to inclusion and discrimination. In planning and practices, behaviours that show support and respect to wards supportive and safe work environment should be included and preached. Supportive procedures and policies focusing on diversity, equal employment

opportunity (EEO), behavioural standards, workplace values and inexistent workplace harassment. Some other supportive policies are development of trust, providing opportunities for staff to interact in settings outside of work so that employees feel more comfortable and are creative, flexible and look for new ways of doing things, recognizing and acknowledging their special days and festivals. Employers must grant a request for a religious accommodation unless doing so would pose an undue hardship on the employer. The 'undue hardship' burden is lighter when it comes to religious accommodation than it is when talking about disability-accommodation requests. For religious accommodation purposes, an undue hardship exists if it would cause more than de minimis cost in terms of money or burden on the operation of the employer's business. Generic co-worker complaints usually should not be taken as valid reasons to deny a request for religious accommodation. No one expects organizations to be well-aware of when accommodating religious beliefs. There is always a practical consequence of consideration of any religious accommodation. Therefore, organizations should be careful in dealing such situations. It is always not necessary on the part of the organizations, to accommodate all religious requests made by the employees, but they can look into certain reasonable requests for accommodating in the organizational culture. Workers are allowed to wear and display religious symbols, experts say, but there is a line in the sand. When an employer receives a request for a religious accommodation, the employer should let the requesting employee know it will make reasonable efforts to accommodate their religious practices. Employers should assess each request on a case-by case basis. Remember, while an employer should consider the employee's requested accommodation, employers are not required to provide an employee's preferred religious accommodation if there's another effective alternative. However, be wary of affording employees who practice certain religions different treatment than afforded to those who practice other religions. Employers should train supervisory personnel to make sure they are aware that a reasonable accommodation may require making exceptions to regular policies or procedures.

The right not to be discriminated against is paramount in protecting the rights of persons belonging to minorities in all regions of the world. Every day, minorities everywhere and anywhere do suffer some or the other kind of discrimination. Hence, the right not to be discriminated should be the criteria in creating supportive work environment. It focused on (a) feedback mechanism, (b) experience of empowerment, (c) communication gestures and tone, (d) mentorship and support, (e) scope for growth and development, (f) perception of fairness. It is argued that if the environment at workplace is perceived as supportive to all then there will be no difference in the perception of

workplace environment by the majority and minority employees. On the contrary, if the perception is negative, the minority will find the workplace not supportive.

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