GENDER AND PERCEPTIONS OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT IN MUNICIPAL SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT: *It is known that diversity is the recognition, understanding, acceptance and acceptance appraisal of the differences between two people with respect to age, social or class, nationality, gender, physical and mental abilities, race, sexual preferences and religious beliefs. Studies have shown that gender diversity is an important factor in the representation of women in diversity management in both the private and public sectors. Literature search revealed no study to investigate gender diversity perceptions in the municipality sports organizations. Therefore, the aim of this study was to compare the gender perceptions of diversity management in municipal sports organizations. It was assumed that they would arise a statistically significant difference in the gender perceptions of employees in municipal sports organization in East Attica. Three hundred and fourteen employments in the sports municipalities in East Attica were randomly selected to participate in the study. For data collection, we used the scale developed by DeMeuse and Hostager (2001). After results analysis of the questionnaire scored by unpaired t-test scores, significant differences were observed in eleven of the total twenty items. It was concluded that women who are working in municipal sports organizations in East Attica had more positive perceptions toward diversity in comparison to their male subjects.*

KEYWORDS: Diversity management, Emotional Reactions, Judgment, Behavioral reactions, Personal Consequences Organizational Outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

«Diversity refers to the variety or multiplicity of demographic features that characterize a company's workforce, particularly in terms of race, sex, culture, national origin, handicap, age and religion» (Dessler, 2011).

«Diversity is the differences among people with regard to age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, and capabilities/disabilities» (Jones and George, 2011).

Diversity is multifactorial and thus is very difficult to develop a correct definition to be enough to explain the phenomenon. Diversity includes factors such as regional, professional, political, and other personal affiliations. Although every human being is unique, with a distinct and individual temperament, each person is also a member of a wide array of identity groups (Dreachslin, 2007).

«Diversity is viewed from two competing perspectives. The advocates of strategic diversity management and its cornerstone cultural competence tout the information value of diversity and the importance of celebrating our differences. Scholars contend that highlighting diversity contributes to conflict because similarity attracts and, therefore, it is best not to draw attention

to diversity and instead emphasise that as human beings our commonalities far outweigh our differences. The first perspective argues for customisation, while the second advocates for homogenization». (Dreachslin, 2007).

According to another definition, diversity has to do with recognition, understanding, acceptance and acceptance appraisal of the differences between two people with regard to age, social or class, nationality, gender, physical and mental abilities, race, sexual preferences and religious beliefs. «Managing diversity as a key component in the effective management of people, arguing that it focuses on improving the organisation's performance and promotes practices that enhance the productivity of all staff. Their dimensions of diversity include gender, race, culture, age, family/carer status, religion, and disability. The definition provided also embraces a range of individual skills, educational qualifications, work experience and background, languages and other relevant» (Rowley and Jackson, 2011).

The types of workplace diversity are: gender, race and ethnicity, religion, education, physical appearance, physical ability/disability, culture/socio-cultural differences, problem-solving ability, critical thinking ability, team building ability, income, music enjoyed, type of books read, TV shows enjoyed, experiences when being raised, language, capability for empathy, ability to be kind, ability to motivate people, ability to work with others, job description, listening ability, conflict resolution ability, level of self-awareness (Wambui et al., 2013).

«Diversity encompasses all forms of differences amongst individuals, including gender, age, ability, religious affiliation, personality, economic class, social status, military attachments and sexual orientation. Diversity is generally defined as "acknowledging, understanding, accepting, valuing and celebrating differences amongst people with respect to age, class, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, race, sexual orientation, spiritual practice and public assistance status» (Esty, Schorr-hiesch, and Griffin, 1995).

«Diversity in the workplace is defined as the recognition of the group of people who share a common trait» (Mfene, 2010).

«Diversity management means the creation of an inter- and intra-national environment within which these divergent perspectives, approach, and sensitivities are incorporated and developed in order to manage diversity in such a way that the full potential (productivity and personal aspirations) of individuals and institutions may be realised optimally» (Greybe and Uys, 2001).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies that relate to the gender diversity in the workplace are published in the international literature (Christian, Porter and Moffitt, 2006; Ocon, 2006; Pelled, Eisenhardt and Xin, 1999).

Studies have shown that gender diversity is an important factor in the representation of women in the management of both the private and public and sectors (Brudney, Hebert, and Wright, 2000; Gilbert and Ivancevich, 2000).

It is accepted that gender diversity in government can lower turnover intention ανδ increase organizational performance for women in public organizations (Choi and Rainey, 2014; Choi and Rainey, 2010; Choi, 2008).

Gender diversity is negatively related to organizational effectiveness and positively related to job satisfaction, inclusion, and organizational performance, for women (Andrews & Ashworth, 2015; Choi & Rainey, 2010; Choi & Rainey, 2014) and Choi & Rainey, 2008).

The research study by Kossek and Zonia, (1993), in the area of assessing diversity climate, examines the relationships among group characteristics (racio-ethnicity, gender, and level), contextual organizational unit characteristics (gender and racio-ethnic heterogeneity and resource support for women) and perceptions of diversity by employees. This study reveals that women placed greater value on employer efforts to promote diversity when compared with men and held more favorable attitudes about the qualifications of women. The results of this research indicate that gender heterogeneity was significantly related to accepting diversity.

The greater the ratio of women in a unit, the more favorable diversity activities were viewed, regardless of the respondents' gender and race or ethnicity. The study points out the need for better understanding of the backlash issues and perceptions, regarding employer activities to promote a diverse workforce. This research suggests for future similar researches across industries that would collect data about acceptance of diversity among employees and suggests taking care of understanding the diversity policies and their influence on diversity perceptions in organizations.

Mor Barak, Cherin and Berkman, (1998) in their study examined diversity perceptions of 2,686 employees and they found that women of different races had more positive perceptions toward diversity in comparison to the male subjects.

Strauss and Connerley (2003), explored relationships between gender and a measure of attitudes toward diversity. The results showed that gender relates to diversity. The authors concluded that women had more positive attitudes toward individual differences than men and are therefore more prone and show greater interest in diversity programs.

Kossek, Lobel and Brown (2006), examined the relationships between perceptions and gender. The results showed that women placed greater value on employer efforts to promote diversity when compared with men. Also, held more favorable attitudes about the qualifications of women.

Cox (1993) in his elaborated work on diversity in organizations, explains the importance of managing diversity in the workplace. According to him, diversity itself does not automatically have positive effects. It must rather be managed effectively to improve organizational effectiveness. Cox defines the goals of diversity management and discusses the importance of managing diversity in the organizations. He identifies the importance of planning and implementing organizational systems and practices to manage people so that the potential advantages of diversity are maximized while the potential disadvantages are minimized. He uses the term "diversity climate" to define collectively the influence of individual, group, and organizational factors that supports diversity in an organization.

Gaze and Oetjen assessed the employees ' perceptions of diversity management varied by gender. Three hundred and twenty-eight subjects participated in the study (68.3% were male and the rest females). Females were not as receptive to diversity as the Asian males. When it came to endorsing diversity initiatives in the workplace, Hispanic and Asian Americans were significantly more receptive to these than their white counterparts. A similar, though statistically insignificant pattern was seen in African Americans compared to the White Americans. The results theoretical and practical implications are discussed, limitations of the

study are noted, along with suggestions for future research, and lastly, managerial implications are presented.

A literature search on the web revealed no study to investigate gender diversity perceptions in the municipality sports organizations. Therefore, this study's aim was to compare the gender perceptions of diversity management in municipal sports organizations.

METHODOLOGY

The present investigation was conducted by the Department of Sports Management, Faculty of Human Movement and Quality of Life, University of Peloponnese. It started in September 2017 and finished at the end of April 2018. The investigation was carried out with the cooperation of the Directors of sports municipalities of East Attica region.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire that was used for the diversity perceptions evaluation for the present study was developed by DeMeuse and Hostager (2001), that was used as the research instrument. The 20-item scale was rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (to strongly agree). The research instrument consisted of five factors, namely emotional reactions, judgments, behavioral reactions, personal consequences and organizational outcomes (Hostager, and De Meuse, 2008).

Procedures

Before the beginning of the study, employees were informed about the aim of the present investigation. Then, the perceptions of diversity scale were distributed to them via the municipal sports organization managers. The researcher sent a research package to them that included a cover letter and the study scale. In the cover letter, the researcher described the study details. The municipal sports organization managers informed the participants about the study and requested them to participate in the study project. Afterward, all subjects who accepted to participate completed the mentioned scale, and returned it to the municipal sports organization managers who forwarded it to the investigators. Finally, there hundred and twenty-seven completed scales were received by the investigators.

Statistics

The data collected from municipal employees in the municipal sports organizations were entered into SPSS 21.0 statistical package for data analysis. Descriptive statistics were conducted to determine the means and standard deviations of the subject's scores, while Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to confirm the internal consistency reliability between items on each. Also, an independent t-test was used to determine the possible statistical difference between scores and genders of the participants. The level of significance was set at $p<0.05$ (Berg and Latin, 2003; Creswell, 2003; Kabitsis, 2004; Thomas, Nelson and Silverman, 2005; Tenenbaum, 2005).

RESULTS/FINDINGS

Section1

Characteristics of the subjects

The present study incorporates 180 (55 %) men and 147 (45 %) women participants employees at the East Attica athletic sports organization. More details are presented in the table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the sample.

Sex		N	%
	Men	180	55
	Women	147	45
Age			
	32-42	51	15.6
	43-53	164	50.2
	>54	112	34.3
Family status			
	Married	196	59.9
	Unmarried/divorced	131	40.1
Education level			
	Primary	24	15.6
	Secondary	155	50.2
	Higher	148	34.3

Section2

Comparison between men and women's diversity perceptions (t-test):

The comparison between men and women's diversity perceptions revealed the following:

A significant difference in the item «I believes that diversity is fair» (men 3,63±1,04 versus women 4,03±1,04, t=-3.89, p<0.001).

A significant difference in the item « I feel enthusiastic about diversity» (3,47±0,983,63±1,04 *versus* 3,85±0,89, t=-3.60, *p*<0.001).

A significant difference in the item «Diversity leads to harmony in organizations», (3,58±0,89 *versus* 4,00±0,77, t=-3.48, *p*<0.001).

A significant difference in the item « I feel frustrated with diversity», (1,70±0,75 *versus* 1,49±0,68, t=-2.67, *p*<0.008).

A significant difference in the item « I feel hopeful about diversity», (3,60±0,90 *versus* 4,00±0,75, t=-4.49, *p*<0.008).

A significant difference in the item «I support diversity efforts in organizations», (3,33±0,81 *versus* 3,86±0,95, t=-3.01, *p*<0.001).

A significant difference in the item « I feel resentful about diversity», (3,53±0,98 *versus* 3,89±0,89, t=-2.54, *p*<0.001).

A significant difference in the item « Diversity leads me to make personal sacrifices», (1,67±0,67 *versus* 1,37±0,49, t=-2.48, *p*<0.005).

A significant difference in the item «I believe that diversity is good», (3,54±0,99 *versus* 4,13±0,88, t=-3.99, *p*<0.001).

No significant differences were observed between the other items (for more details see table 2).

Table 2. Diversity perceptions of the subjects and significance among them (t-test).

Questions	Men	Women	t	p
I believe that diversity is fair	3,63±1,04	4,03±1,04	-3,89	<0,001
Diversity is stressful for me	1,75±0,70	1,65±0,72	-1.65	NS
I feel enthusiastic about diversity	3,47±0,98	3,85±0,89	-3,60	<0,001
Diversity is expensive for organizations	1,70±0,73	1,77±0,71	-0,85	NS
Diversity leads to harmony in organizations	3,58±0,89	4,00±0,77	-3,48	<0,001
I feel frustrated with diversity	1,70±0,75	1,49±0,68	-2,67	<0.008
I feel hopeful about	3,60±0,90	4,00±0,75	-3,49	NS
I believe that diversity is worthless	1,60±0,59	1,66±0,56	-0,85	NS
I support diversity efforts in organizations	3,33±0,81	3,86±0,95	-3,01	<0,001
I withdraw from organizational diversity efforts	1,54±0,63	1,61±0,68	-0,85	NS
Diversity is rewarding for me	3,20±0,77	3,50±0,74	-1,17	NS
I feel resentful about diversity	3,53±0,98	3,89±0,89	-3,33	<0,001
Diversity is an asset for organizations	3,40±0,56	3,98±0,70	-2,54	<0.005
Diversity leads me to make personal sacrifices	1,67±0,67	1,37±0,49	-2,48	<0.005
I participate in organizational diversity efforts	3,18±0,72	3,30±0,78	-0,98	NS
I resist organizational diversity efforts	1,50±0,44	1,62±0,51	-0,79	NS
I believe that diversity is good	3,54±0,99	4,13±0,88	-3,99	<0,001
Diversity is unprofitable for organizations	1,27±0,55	1,33±0,57	-0,87	NS
Diversity is enriching for me	1,44±0,50	1,52±0,57	-0,92	NS
I believe that diversity is unjustified	1,58±0,48	1,63±0,55	-0,88	NS

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to compare the gender perceptions of diversity management in municipal sports organizations. We sued for the data collection using the scale developed by DeMeuse and Hostager (2001; 2008). The results showed that among 20 diversity items there were statistical differences in six positives and four negatives. So, the total score revealed that women are more positive toward diversity management than men in the workplace.

Our results are in line with the study of the Martins and Parsons (2007), who examined that individual gender-related attitudes and beliefs, affect the reactions of men and women to gender diversity management programs in organizations. The authors showed that although there are

no significant differences between-sex in the effects of gender diversity management on organizational attractiveness but there were powerful differences within-sex based on individual beliefs and attitudes. It seems to be crucial for organizations both in the private or public sector to include attempts to administrate perceptions of gender diversity administration programs into their diversity management strategies.

Similar are the results of Mor Barak study (2011), in which 2,686 employees were examined for perceptual differences and discovered that women of different races contended positive perceptions toward diversity as opposed to men.

Also, Gallego-Álvarez et al (2010) supported that diversity in firms has attracted the attentiveness regard and created disagreement, especially on the challenges regarding ethnic diversity and gender.

Janse Van Rensburg and Roodt (2005) expressed the opinion that the observing imbalance in the number of females versus males in organizations goes on with to influence goal attainment, corporate governance, and improvement in organisational culture.

Sipe, Johnson, and Fisher, (2009) showed that men and women employees have non-identical perceptions of gender diversity in the workplace.

Ebie and Djebarni, 2011, investigated the business case for diversity in 100 small and medium-size Enterprises. Female managers were found to have more positive attitudes towards diversity than their male employees.

Cundiff, Nadler, and Swan (2009) in their study, which was conducted on 294 college students at a moderate sized Midwestern University, found that female employees show more concern and attentiveness in diversity capabilities as oppose to males. Female employees were also found to have more positive perceptions toward diversity programs. More, women were found to be highly identified with the need for diversity programs than men.

Martins and Parsons (2007), resolved that gender-related perceptions affect the reactions of men and women to diversity management in organizations. They found that women are discriminated in the workplace, diversity management on organizational issues. The authors suggested that organizations should incorporate programs in order to manage perceptions of gender diversity in their workplace.

Beaton and Tougas (2001), in another study in which 264 women and men participated, found that women reacted positively to diversity management programs benefiting women.

Many other researchers found out that men had more negative perceptions of workplace diversity (Thompson 2000; Strauss and Connerley 2003).

On the contrary, Dombai and Verwey (1999) theorize that gender variation in their results, point out that there is no significant difference between the male and female subjects of their study. The male interviewees were steadily more positive than the female interviewees in the five factors, although this difference was not statistically significant. This may be assigned to the aspect, that, organizations incline in the direction of paternalistic cultures in which men are still not ~~confirmed~~ confirmly regarded as first among equals and where women may still experience the discrimination. This could also explain why the female subjects did not rate the items as positively as their male colleagues.

Also, according to the Beaty, Adonosi, and Taylor (2007) study, both sexes related to diversity items, in the same way, specifically their perceptions in the direction of organizational politics that is generated in the workplace due to diversity. The authors concluded that both females and males were equally tolerant of political behaviour because of the increasing awareness of the importance of justice and positive discrimination in the workplace.

Likewise, Hostager and DeMeuse (2008), found no significant differences in gender diversity perceptions. The authors in the discussion section gave an explanation to support their results, arguing that there is more than one way in which female perceptions can be differentiated in comparison to the male. They also stated that «studies that adopt only one approach to defining this effect run the risk of capturing a simplistic and incomplete view of such a complex perceptual phenomenon».

It seems that the homogeneity between men and women behaving in a particular way could be of greater differences. Generally, women can be prone to pursue a more transforming management style with the emphasis on the consensus, followers, and the use of attractiveness and personal contact to enhance interpersonal relations and to influence followers. «Men in general, on the other hand, tend to follow a more directive style where job performance is seen as a series of transactions with subordinates, where rewards are exchanged for services and punishment for inadequate performance – that is, more of a transactional approach. Men seem to be more inclined to use formal position, power and authority to control people. It is, however, imperative to emphasize the above generalizations and that many men possess certain attributes that are linked mainly to the females and vice versa» (Swanepoel et al., 2008).

Study limitations

Although the use of municipal employees was appropriate and can be considered as a homogenous sample, specifying the attention of our study centred on the gender and diversity perceptions, the use of this sample raises methodological issues regarding the results generalization. Our use of a sample consisted of employees working in East Attica who assisted us to create a fairly representative bridge to this area. However, since East Attica is near to the capital of Athens, it is possible to be culturally different with 12 other Greek prefectures. More can be noticed, although our samples were diverse with regard to gender, our study was limited by the lack of diversity in other aspects of our participant's sample, including age, family status, racial, educational level and ethnic-related diversity.

CONCLUSION

The present study supported the main hypothesis according to which women are more positive than men in the management of diversity in the workplace of the municipal sports organizations. Future studies in order to generalize our results and benefit should be conducted in a greater geographic area, include participants from beyond the East Attica, to other prefectures of the Greek and possible to other countries. Finally, we imagine a series of cross-cultural studies of gender diversity perceptions.

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