

AGE AND PERCEPTIONS OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT IN MUNICIPAL SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT: *Diversity is any characteristic that creates people different from one another. It is the similarities and differences between workers in terms of gender, age, educational level, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other dimensions. Workplace diversity is the importance of similarities and differences that exist among employees of athletic organizations. It means a workplace consisted of people who belong to various cultural groups or people with different human qualities. Age is a variable that is rarely discussed as the main point of diversity in sports organizations. Therefore the aim of the present study was to determine the impact of age on the perceptions of diversity management of employees working in east Attica municipal sports organizations. Three hundred and twenty-five subjects working in the sports municipalities in east Attica randomly selected participated in the study. For data collection, we used the scale developed by DeMeuse and Hostager (2001). After results analysis of the questionnaire scores by ANOVA, significant differences were observed in nine of a total of twenty items. It is concluded that employees of older age who work in municipal sports organizations of East Attica had more negative perceptions toward diversity in comparison to other age groups.*

KEYWORDS: Workplace Diversity, Diversity management, Age, Diversity perceptions, Municipal sports organizations

INTRODUCTION

Diversity definition

Palmer (1989), «outlines three ways in which diversity in the workplace has been viewed. She states that the way many people in the past have dealt with diversity is to see it as a moral issue. They attempt to create opportunities for people who are diverse because it is a just, fair, and right thing to do. She calls this paradigm «The Golden Rule».

Griggs (1995), gives an explanation of the diversity meaning in the broadest way. He believes that diversity not include only differences in gender, age, education, language, physical ability, religion, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, region of origin, but also differences in job function, life experience, personality, rank within hierarchy, position in family, and other similar characteristics that that contribute a person's perspective in his workplace. Into an organization, diversity surrounds every individual difference that has an effect on relationship or task.

Diversity also has an influence on the services and products developed by its employees as well as on interpersonal, personal, and activities of an organization.

George and Jones (1996), define diversity as the resulting differences from gender, age, religion, race, socioeconomic background and sexual orientation. If a team or an organization

is consisted of subjects who are all of the same age, ethnicity, gender, religion and so on, the perceptions, behaviours, and attitudes and of its members are possible to be very relating. People of a particular group are likely to have the same sets of values or assumptions and will react to work situations (conflicts, new tasks and projects) in analogous ways.

Conversely, if the members of the team differ in gender, age, ethnicity, and other characteristics, their perceptions, behaviour and attitudes are possible to differ.

Esty, Griffin and Hirsch (1995) concentrated focused on ten factors of diversity that they believe are the most crucial for the workplace i.e., age, class, ethnicity, family situation, gender, hierarchy/status, physical ability/disability, race, religion and sexual orientation.

More recently Dreachslin (2007, reported that «diversity is generally viewed from two competing perspectives. Advocates of strategic diversity management and its cornerstone cultural competence tout the 'information value of diversity' and the importance of 'celebrating our differences' Challengers contend that highlighting diversity contributes to conflict because 'similarity attracts' and, therefore, it is best not to draw attention to diversity and instead emphasize that as human beings our commonalities far outweigh our differences. The first perspective argues for customization, while the second advocates for homogenization».

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 Management

Managing diversity has become a new human resources mandate as organizations seek to maintain a competitive edge and compete successfully in a global economy. This mandate takes on a sense of urgency as organizations witness changes in the ethnicity, sex and age of the workforce» (Dobbs, 1996).

«Diversity management “refers to the voluntary organizational actions that are designed to create through deliberate policies and programs greater inclusion of employees from various backgrounds into the formal and informal organizational structures» (Mor Barak, 2014).

«Diversity is the mixture of the workforce from different socio-cultural backgrounds working together in an organization» (Evans & Henry, 2007).

Diversity can be seen as the characteristics of a social group, that reveals the degree of objectives or subjective differences that exist among groups (Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007).

Workforce diversity is defined «as a strategy that promotes and supports the integration of human diversity at all levels and uses focused diversity and inclusion policies and practices to guide this approach in work environment» Scott & Sims (2016).

All these definitions simply show that diversity is all about the characteristics that make us different or similar to one another. In an organizational setting, a diverse workforce consists of a mixture of employees of various genders, ages, races, ethnic backgrounds, religious beliefs, etc.

Age and diversity perceptions of employees

Age is a variable that is rarely discussed as the main point of diversity in sports organizations, since the emphasis is more on other variables such as gender, race, ethnicity, etc. However, the literature search revealed studies, that investigated the age as the comparative variable of diversity employees perception in different workplaces. Some of these studies are presented in the next sentences.

Yousef (1998), determined the diversity management perceptions of 352 employees working at the local government departments of the Emirate. The instrument of his study was developed by Meyer and Allen and consisted of 24 items. Results showed that diversity perceptions were only important for the younger employees. It seems that older workers are not interested in future changes in the organization, because they exit the labour force.

Feldman (2001), in his master thesis, found that there is no significant difference between the age of employees and their perception of diversity policy implementation. Further investigation of this topic found research carried out by Walbrugh and Roodt (2003), reported that younger groups (< 35 years) felt progressively more optimistic about Employment Equity and diversity initiatives that were implemented within their organisations than the older groups aged 36-50 years. The 50 and over age group also felt more positive towards diversity.

Walbrugh and Roodt (2003), determined the age differences of employees working within nine South African companies from different industries. A large sample of 4729 subjects participated in the study. The results showed that the category under 24 years was more positive towards employment equity practices in comparison with the age groups between 31-50 years. There were not observed statistically significant differences between the subjects between 36-40 y, 41-45y, 46-50 y and up to 51 years of age.

Ebie and Djerbarni (2011), investigated the perceptions of diversity in small and medium-sized enterprises. Data were collected from 100 small businesses by using questionnaires. Owners and managers within different sectors and from various locations in Wales were answered in the mentioned scales. Results showed that business owners and white managers were more associated with negative attitudes towards diversity in their organisations. Similarly, younger executives, under 25 years and were negative in their perceptions towards diversity challenges. Also, female directors were found to have more positive attitudes towards diversity than their male employees.

Patrick and Kumar (2012), investigated the effects of age perceptions of 350 employees who work in fifteen top companies in India. Data were collected by a questionnaire that administered to employees. Data analysis showed that there were significant differences between age groups toward diversity perceptions, with the 21- to 25-year age group, followed by the 31- to 35-year age group and the 26- to 30-year age group.

Van der Walt and Du Plessis (2010), illustrated the diversity perceptions of librarians Gauteng and Environs Library Consortium in South Africa according to age distribution. The questionnaire used in this study was a self-administered, small-scale, cross-sectional, descriptive and quantitative. «The results showed that most of the middle and senior level library management positions are currently filled by those retiring in the next 15-20 years and that the planning and training of new middle and top management staff members must form part of succession planning policies in order to avoid a leadership vacuum».

From the literature, it is clear that sports organisations have a responsibility to develop and implement policies to not only encourage age diversity but also to create an organisational identity. Municipality sports organizations are no exception to this, which consequently requires an investigation of age diversity in this field.

Therefore the purpose of this study aimed to compare diversity perceptions of employees working in Municipalities in east Attica and to compare them with age distribution.

METHODS

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

Instrument

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

Procedures

Before the beginning of the study, all employees were informed about the purpose of the present study. Then, the perceptions of diversity instrument were distributed to them via the municipal sports organization managers. The researcher sent a research package to them that included the study questionnaire with a cover letter. 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. Afterwards, all subjects who they decided to participate completed the mentioned instrument, that returned it to the municipal sports organization managers and from there to investigators. Finally, three hundred and twenty-seven questionnaires were completed and transferred by the sports municipality managers to the investigator.

Statistics

The data that 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 subjects' scores, while Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to confirm the internal consistency reliability between items on each. Also, an analysis of variance with a Bonferroni post hoc multiple comparisons were used to determine possible statistical difference between scores and age 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*

In the present study participated 147 (45 %) women and 180 (55 %) men working at East Attica athletic sports organizations. More details are presents in 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

Analysis of variance between age and questionnaire subjects scores and significance between them.

Table 2 describes the analysis of variance between the scores and the age of the subjects. In this, one can observe the following:

1) In the item «I believe that diversity is fair», the mean value of the subjects aged between 32-42 year was 3.49 ± 1.04 , the mean value of the subjects aged between 43-53 years was 3.99 ± 0.87 and the corresponding average of those over the age of 53 years was 3.82 ± 0.91 . This difference was statistically significant ($F_{224} = 4.04, p < 0.018$). Further meta-analysis with the Bonferroni method revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the employees who were 32 years of age and those who were 42 years of age ($p < 0.002$).

2) In the item «Diversity is stressful for me», the mean value of the subjects aged between 32-42 year was 1.69 ± 0.73 , the mean value of the subjects aged between 43-53 years was 1.70 ± 0.72 and the corresponding average of those over the age of 53 years was 1.46 ± 0.67 . This difference was statistically significant ($F_{224} = 5.99, p < 0.003$). Further meta-analysis with the Bonferroni method revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the employees who were 42 years of age and those who were up to 53 years of age ($p < 0.02$).

3) In the item «Diversity leads to harmony in organizations», the mean value of the subjects aged between 32-42 year was 3.38 ± 0.71 , the mean value of the subjects aged between 43-53 years was 3.81 ± 0.86 and the corresponding average of those over the age of 53 years was 3.78 ± 0.85 . This difference was statistically significant ($F_{224} = 5.24, p < 0.005$). Further meta-analysis with the Bonferroni method revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the employees who were 32 years of age and those who were up to 41 years of age ($p < 0.03$).

4) In the item « I feel frustrated with diversity», the mean value of the subjects aged between 32-42 year was 1.71 ± 0.69 , the mean value of the subjects aged between 43-53 years was 1.74 ± 0.77 and the corresponding average of those over the age of 53 years was 1.45 ± 0.57 . This difference was statistically significant ($F_{224} = 5.012, p < 0.008$). Further meta-analysis with the Bonferroni method revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the employees who were 42 years of age and those who were up to 53 years of age ($p < 0.02$).

5) In the item «I support diversity efforts in organizations», the mean value of the subjects aged between 32-42 year was 3.71 ± 0.78 , the mean value of the subjects aged between 43-53 years was 3.79 ± 0.73 and the corresponding average of those over the age of 53 years was 3.45 ± 0.56 . This difference was statistically significant ($F_{224} = 4.917, p < 0.01$). Further meta-analysis with the Bonferroni method revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the employees who were 32 years of age and those who were between 32-42 years of age ($p < 0.05$).

6) In the item « Diversity is an asset for organisations», the mean value of the subjects aged between 32-42 year was 3.94 ± 0.69 , the mean value of the subjects aged between 43-53 years was 3.40 ± 1.01 and the corresponding average of those over the age of 53 years was 3.91 ± 0.83 . This difference was statistically significant ($F_{224} = 6.923, p < 0.001$). Further meta-analysis with the Bonferroni method revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the employees who were 32 years of age and those who were between 32-42 years of age ($p < 0.005$).

7) In the item « Diversity is unprofitable for organizations», the mean value of the subjects aged between 32-42 year was 1.65 ± 0.63 , the mean value of the subjects aged between 43-53 years was 1.73 ± 0.84 and the corresponding average of those over the age of 53 years was 1.48 ± 0.59 . This difference was statistically significant ($F_{224} = 6.555, p < 0.001$). Further meta-analysis with the Bonferroni method revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the employees who were 42 years of age and those who were up to 53 years of age ($p < 0.005$).

8) In the item « Diversity is enriching for me», the mean value of the subjects aged between 32-42 year was 3.94 ± 0.69 , the mean value of the subjects aged between 43-53 years was 3.44 ± 0.81 and the corresponding average of those over the age of 53 years was 3.86 ± 0.93 . This difference was statistically significant ($F_{224} = 3.167, p < 0.05$). Further meta-analysis with the Bonferroni method revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the employees who were 32 years of age and those who were between 32-42 years of age ($p < 0.05$).

9) In the item «I believe that diversity is unjustified», the mean value of the subjects aged between 32-42 year was 1.66 ± 0.53 , the mean value of the subjects aged between 43-53 years was 1.77 ± 0.79 and the corresponding average of those over the age of 53 years was 1.49 ± 0.58 . This difference was statistically significant ($F_{224} = 3.001, p < 0.05$). Further meta-analysis

with the Bonferroni method revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the employees who were 42 years of age and those who were up to 53 years of age ($p < 0.05$).

Table 2. Analysis of variance between age and questionnaire subjects scores and significance between them.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1. I believe that diversity is fair +	Between Groups	10,077	2	5,039	5,99	,003
	Within Groups	272,168	324	,840		
	Total	282,245	326			
2. Diversity is stressful for me -	Between Groups	4,020	2	2,010	4,040	,018
	Within Groups	161,197	324	,498		
	Total	165,217	326			
3. I feel enthusiastic about diversity	Between Groups	,238	2	,119	,127	,880
	Within Groups	302,319	324	,933		
	Total	302,557	326			
4. Diversity is expensive for organizations	Between Groups	,243	2	,122	,231	,794
	Within Groups	170,179	324	,525		
	Total	170,422	326			
5. Diversity leads to harmony in organizations +	Between Groups	11,077	2	5,018	5,24	,005
	Within Groups	274,168	324	,834		
	Total	285,245	326			
6. I feel frustrated with diversity -	Between Groups	,249	2	,129	,291	,823
	Within Groups	168,178	324	,544		
	Total	168,427	326			
7. I feel hopeful about diversity	Between Groups	1,966	2	,983	1,608	,202
	Within Groups	198,070	324	,611		
	Total	200,036	326			
8. I believe that diversity is worthless	Between Groups	,809	2	,404	,741	,477
	Within Groups	176,812	324	,546		
	Total	177,621	326			
9. I support diversity efforts in organizations +	Between Groups	9,621	2	3,928	4,917	,01
	Within Groups	255,333	324	,761		
	Total	264,954	326			
10. I withdraw from organizational diversity efforts	Between Groups	2,349	2	1,174	2,689	,069
	Within Groups	159,423	324	,437		
	Total	161,772	326			

11. Diversity is rewarding for me	Between Groups	8,712	2	4,356	7,533	,001
	Within Groups	211,054	324	,578		
	Total	219,766	326			
12. I feel resentful about diversity	Between Groups	,425	2	,212	,505	,604
	Within Groups	153,522	324	,421		
	Total	153,947	326			
13. Diversity is an asset for organizations	Between Groups	161,771	2			
	Within Groups	11,604	324	5,802	6,923	,001
	Total	173,375	326	,838		
14. Diversity leads me to make personal sacrifices	Between Groups	1,110	2	,555	1,261	,284
	Within Groups	160,661	324	,440		
	Total	161,771	326			
15. I participate in organizational diversity efforts	Between Groups	3,868	2	1,934	1,815	,164
	Within Groups	345,196	324	1,065		
	Total	349,064	326			
16. I resist organizational diversity efforts	Between Groups	2,267	2	1,134	1,521	,220
	Within Groups	241,482	324	,745		
	Total	243,749	326			
17. I believe that diversity is good	Between Groups	4,993	2	2,497	1,774	,171
	Within Groups	455,985	324	1,407		
	Total	460,948	326			
18. Diversity is unprofitable for organizations	Between Groups	10,455	2	5,207	6,555	,001
	Within Groups	301,999	324	,944		
	Total	312,454	326			
19. Diversity is enriching for me	Between Groups	4,300	2	2,150	3,167	,05
	Within Groups	152,645	324	,815		
	Total	156,945	326			
20. I believe that diversity is unjustified	Between Groups	4,200	2	1,200	3,001	,05
	Within Groups	151,647	324	,415		
	Total	155,847	326			

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to compare the age perceptions of diversity management in municipal sports organizations. We used for the data collection the questionnaire developed by Demeuse and Hostager (2001; 2008). It was hypothesized that there was a statistically significant difference in perceptions towards diversity based on differences in age of employees in municipal sports organisations of East Attica. Our results confirmed this statistical

hypothesis. According to the statistical results of the present study, there was a statistically significant difference in perceptions towards diversity based on age. Hence, the null hypothesis would be confirmed.

Age is a variable that is rarely discussed as the main point of diversity in sports organizations, since the emphasis is more on other variables such as gender, race, ethnicity, etc. However, the literature search revealed studies, that investigated the age as the comparative variable of diversity employees perception in different workplaces. Some studies support that there are significant differences between perceptions or attitudes and diversity management, while others that there are not.

We used for the present study the questionnaire developed by Hostager and De Meuse (2008). The main character of this instrument was that included positive and negative diversity perceptions.

Our results are in line with those of Walbrugh and Roodt (2003), who reported that younger employees under 35 years of age, had more positive diversity perceptions in comparison with the older groups aged 36-50 years.

In similar results ended the study of Janse van Rensburg & Roodt (2005), who they found that the employees up to 50 years had had more positive diversity perceptions towards the other groups.

Also, Beaty, Adonisi and Taylor, (2007), reinforce the findings in the present study, in which it is showed that there was a significant difference between the age and the diversity management perceptions of the employees within sports organisations

On the other hand, Soldan (2009) did not find any significant differences in perceptions towards diversity based on age. She believes that older employees are likely to experience discrimination in access to development and training. Also, is more likely the older workers to deny promotions and to have difficulty in accepting paid employment.

Feldman (2001), in his study, it was also found that there is no significant difference between the age of employees and their perception of diversity management.

Dombai et al. (1999), find positive and negative perceptions. The employees under 30 years of age showed positive perceptions in their evaluation of diversity management. Respondents with up to 40 years of age were the most negative in their responses. Subjects between 30-40 years old generated the most neutral responses of the three groups.

Cumming et al. (2009) indicate that to face age diversity, sports organisations develop activities, such as wellness programs and work design. Reward systems and career planning must be adapted to these different age groups. Although it is important for athletic organisations to implement diversity policies, it is difficult to focus on every individual diversity.

In the study conducted by Matz-Costa, Carapinha and Pitt-Catsouphes (2012), compared the diversity perceptions of employees aged 17 to 77years. It was founded that employees who have decreased diversity perceptions are close to retirement. Younger workers showed the highest levels of diversity perceptions.

The other point according to our results that can be noticed is that there were no statistically significant differences in all questions, but only 5 to positive and 4 to negative ones. The

possible explanation for these results is the big homogeneity of the sample since in the study participated employees from east Attica. Also, in the other published studies, there was a different age classification with smaller categories. Perhaps the four categories of the presents study to affect the data comparison between diversity perceptions and age.

Weakness of the study

Although the use of municipal employees was appropriate and can be considered as a homogenous sample, specified the center of attention of our study on the age and perceptions of diversity, the use of this sample raises methodological issues regarding generalization of the results. Our use of a sample consisted of employees working in east Attica assists create a fairly representative bridge to these areas. However, since east Attica is near to the capital of Athens, it is possible to be cultural differences with 12 other Greek prefectures. More can be noticed, although our sample was diverse with regard to age, our study was limited by the lack of diversity in other aspects of our participant's sample, including education level, gender, family status, ethnic and racial related diversity.

CONCLUSION

The present study supported the main hypothesis according to which there are differences between age in the management of diversity in the workplace as they are the municipal sports organizations. Future studies in order to generalize our results should conduct in the greater geographic area, included participants from beyond the East Attica, to other prefectures of the Greek and possible to other countries in the world. Finally, we imagine a series of cross-cultural studies of age diversity perceptions.

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