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Searching for Common Threads: Understanding the Role of Age Diversity in Organizational Performance

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Abstract:

The demographic changes occurring in most countries poses an urgent challenge for many organizations. Companies are confronted with the fact that their workforce is getting older and younger employees are being recruited hence creating an age diverse labour force. These changes imply that companies which have historically had a largely homogenous older workforce, have to integrate an increasing number of younger employees which in turn creates an increasingly age-diverse labour force. Therefore, the pressing question for practitioners in these organizations concerns the effects of the age-diverse workforce on the firm's overall performance and which organizational intervention strategies may influence it. This paper seeks to advance the diversity literature by investigating the role of age diversity in organizational performance. Drawing from similarity attraction, social-identity, social categorization and human capital theories, the paper theoretically advance an argument that, in age-diverse firms, age-based sub grouping processes occur, favoring a shared perception of a negative age-discrimination climate. This perceived negative age-discrimination climate in turn negatively relates to organizational performance. Diversity-friendly Human Resource policies are potential organizational intervention strategies that can prevent the negative relations of age diverse workforce and its impact on organizational performance.

Keywords: Workforce diversity, diversity management, age diversity, organizational performance, human resource

1. Introduction

1.1. Workforce Diversity

Cox (2001) defines workforce diversity as the variation of social and cultural identities among people existing together in a defined employment or marketing setting. William and O'Reilly (1998) also defines workforce diversity as the degree of heterogeneity among team members on specified demographic dimensions, their theory aiming to explain how such heterogeneity affects team processes and performance. Thomas and Ely (1996) explains that workforce diversity should be understood as the varied perspectives and approaches to work, that members of different identity groups bring. They add that it refers to the co-existence of employees from various social-cultural backgrounds within the company. Workforce diversity therefore requires a type of organizational culture in which each employee can pursue his or her career aspirations without being inhibited by age, gender, race, nationality, religion, physical ability or other factors that are irrelevant to performance (Bryan, 1999). Employee diversity is therefore a concept that recognizes the benefits to be gained from differences. It differs from equal opportunity, which aims to legislate against discrimination, and it assumes that people should be assimilated into the organization, and often relies on affirmative action. Thus managing diversity means understanding its effects and implementing behaviors, work practices and policies that respond to them in an effective way (Cox, 2001).

1.2. Workforce Diversity Management

According to Scott and Byrd (2012) workforce diversity management has emerged as a power strategy for handling diversity issues. Valuing and managing diversity is becoming more and more essential for delivering higher level of performance and creativity, enhancing problem solving and decision making. Scott and Byrd (2012) citing Roosevelt (1990) argue that workforce diversity management does not mean containing, controlling or stifling diversity rather it means management recognizing the utility of every feature of diversity and tapping the potentials. Evans and Henry (2007) on the other hand defined workforce diversity management as a planned methodical commitment of an organization to attract, recruit and retain a heterogeneous group of people. Managing workforce diversity means enabling employees to make use of their full potentials by making the work environment an equitable. Organizational leaders are therefore responsible for creating effective diversity policies and ensuring its implementation. To effectively manage workforce diversity means they must work to ensure that unfair discriminations are eliminated within the work environment (Robbins and Judge, 2013). Top executives play the role of communicating the value of diversity and a

commitment to diversity within the organization while the managers ensure that the work environment is one that embraces diversity (Scott and Byrd, 2012).

Diversity management is therefore based on the idea that people are key asset for organizational success. By recognizing that people are characterized by many intersected diversities that needs to be managed, a workforce diversity management approach maintains that only the conscious management of these diversities can establish a real outstanding and lasting competitive advantage for the organization (Cole and Salimath, 2013). For diversity program to be effective, it requires the commitment of organization's board and managers. Recognizing that these are the people who are responsible for extending the awareness, attention and commitment to people's diversities to all employees. Therefore, organizations are required to have intention and capacity to promote and shape a culture of inclusion (Cole and Salimath, 2013).

1.3. Dimensions of Diversity

Diversity is distinguished along the primary, secondary and tertiary or organizational dimensions. Differences among employees can be categorized into two aspects; primary differences such as; age, gender, race etc. and the secondary differences such as; educational background, communication style, etc. (Aydan, 2016).

1.3.1. Primary Dimension

Primary dimension reveals the key dissimilarities among diverse individuals as well as the highest impact on initial encounters, it could be quickly detected and it also serve as a filter through which people view the world. It includes visible identity characteristics such as; age, gender, sexual orientation, physical abilities, ethnicity, race, etc. (Sayers, 2012). Powell (2011) adds that they are those essential unchangeable personal characteristics that exert significant lifelong impacts and they shape our basic self-image sense of identity.

1.3.2. The Secondary Dimension

Secondary differences include; educational background, communication style, marital status, organizational role and position, religion, geographic location, income, work experience and work style, are qualities that are not noticeable in the first encounter and can even change throughout different encounters. These dimensions appear to be less visible, exert a more variable influence on personal, and add a more subtle richness to the primary dimension of diversity (Sayers, 2012). People are usually less sensitive about these aspects because they are element we have made a choice on and we have the power to change them. The secondary dimensions of diversity are referred to by organizational researchers as Experience-based diversity. This form of diversity includes a wide range of differences that are acquired, discarded, and/or modified throughout one's lifetime and as a result, are less pertinent to one's core identity. Powell (2011) said the secondary dimensions are our personal changeable characteristics. Characteristics that over the years we have acquired, we may decide to modify or even abandon throughout our life time.

1.3.3. Organizational Dimension

Organizational dimension deal with characteristics within the organization such as; organizational structure, part time or full time, organizational climate or culture, status, etc. (Sayers, 2012). The basis for secondary and organizational dimensions of diversity is information processing and decision making theory. This perspective suggest that diversity when managed will have positive implications on work group outcomes since such groups will have a wide array of views, skills, and information. Educational background, functional and industrial experience are part of the competencies that one employs when undertaking a task. The ability to productively discuss and examine task related content issues grounded in a diverse set of perspectives can enhance performance.

1.4. Age Diversity

According to Kunze (2013), age diversity is defined as the differences in age distribution among employees and is used to describe the composition of the organisation or the composition of workgroups within an organization. Age diversity has become a key managerial concern, for example Opstal (2009) argue that when managers fail to manage generational gaps amongst employees, conflicts are likely to evolve and thus reducing the productivity of employees. In addition, according to Backes-Gellner and Veen (2015) argument using a cost benefit analysis of the firm, an increasing age heterogeneity may result in poor communication, less interaction and reduced employee performance due to differing values and preferences. Backes-Gellner and Veen (2015) further stated that organizations that focus much on routine tasks rather than creative tasks are likely not to experience any significant gains from age diversity that can counterbalance the increasing costs of a more age diversity.

In contrast to the above, Boehm and Kunze (2015) argued that an age heterogeneous workforce yields a host of multiple skills, intellectual styles, morals, and preferences that may result in increased productivity. The concept of age diversity is a shared phenomenon that is present in nearly all groupings, such as families, higher institutions, sport teams, and work or team groups with members of varying ages (Kunze, Boehm and Bruch, 2013). Rowe (2010) poses that each workforce is unique in its generational diversity, which presents new challenges to organizations attempting to attract, retain, manage, and motivate quality employees. Rowe (2010) concludes that where age diversity is practiced, the benefits accrue both to the organization and the employees and having an age diverse environment produces and creates better working relationships and enhances social cohesion for all.

1.4.1. Generations in the Workplace

Generation is a group of persons born and living at the same period, who have common attitudes, tastes, knowledge and experiences that affect their thoughts, values, beliefs and behaviors (Zemke, Raines and Filipczak, 2013). Each generation have diverse perceptions and expectations that they bring to the work environment. Perceptions of how they are to behave, how they will manage others and expectations of how they will be managed by their employers or managers. The four generations of workforce all possess outstanding work ethics, different point of view on work, unique and preferred ways of managing and being managed. Hence, as the population ages, many older workers are exiting, as such, there is entry of middle aged workers and internships opportunities bringing in younger employees. Abrams and Von Frank (2014) stated that, as the labour force get older the baby boomers are leaving or preparing to leave the labour market, there are not enough generation Xers to fill the gap and the millennials are becoming an even larger percentage.

1.4.1.1. Veterans or Traditionalist

This is a generation born before 1943, they are people who grew-up when the Great Depression and World War II began and they face the world with a can do attitude (Zemke, Raines, and Filipczak, 2013). The vision and hard work of this generation built the foundation of the world we now live and work in despite all its challenges. They shook off the great depression and rejuvenated a failing economy. Their mindsets have dominated world culture causing every other set of beliefs to be weighed against theirs. The core values of the Traditionalists stated by Zemke, Raines and Filipczak (2013) are; honor, patience, dedication, sacrifice, hard work, duty before pleasure, adherent to rules, respect for authority, conformity, law and order. They are disciplined, have respect for authority, they place a strong emphasis on teamwork and they prefer face-to-face interaction. They are variously labeled the Veterans, matures, silence, loyalties, etc. They make up the tiniest percentage of the present world populations. Presently, most of them have moved into part-time work and some into retirement. They are fair and impartial, with good communication skills, and they have a deep believe in the power of dialogue. They love to be placed as mediators. The traditionalist or veterans are careful when performing tasks and they perform task with efficiency and effectiveness to deliver quality. They also tend to work according to standards and are consistent in performing their job role. They are the most loyal and committed employees to the organization and its goals. They tend to get satisfaction from the work itself and this satisfaction comes from doing the job well. They have both life and work experience that can be useful in organization. They possess a cooperative and team oriented attitude (Zemke, Raines and Filipczak, 2013).

1.4.1.2. The Baby Boomers

This generation was born between 1943 and 1960, after the World War II and they were raised in the time of opportunities, extreme optimism, and progress. They are known to be rational, inclusive, collaborative, task-oriented, and highly productive. They value experience, listening and encouraging rather than sharing leadership. They believe in participative leadership but they don't delegate easily. They also like to uphold the status quo (Abrams and Von Frank, 2014).

1.4.1.3. Generation X

This generation was born between 1960 and 1980, and it is made up of people who were born after the blush of the baby boomers, who came of age deep in the shadows of the Boomers and the rise of the Asian tigers. With regards to leadership, generation Xers are effective leaders in crisis. They are fair, straightforward, perceptive, practical and strategic leaders who do not like to lead by crafting vision statements or having meetings. Instead, they lead their groups by providing them with task that challenges their thinking into bring the group into effective decision making. They want to eliminate obstacles, leave individuals to do their work on their own, and then offer feedback and share credit. Their greatest skills are that they are competent in observing, identifying unmet needs, they have the ability to conceal feelings when it is necessary, ability to move quickly when the moment is right, and to make sure that whatever people try does in fact work as intended. They believe in taking incredible risk is the best way to win. For instance in an organization, if a manager or an employer wants to get things done without minding how it was done, generation Xers are the right people for the job. They have the capacity to distinguish between mistakes that matters and those that do not. As leaders, they excel at cunning, flexible, and deft timing. They are plain spoken, sensible, and quick on their feet and are more inclined to deal than to argue (Zemke, Raines and Filipczak, 2013).

1.4.1.4. Generation Y or the Millennials

This is a generation born between 1980 and 2004, they are the people born by the Boomers and early Xers into a culture where children were cherished, nurtured, and protected. This is the newest generation on the job market. They see and take their parents as their heroes. They are so tied to technology and social media for example face book, twitter, etc. and they make and have friends scattered all over the globe which they contact at any time of the day. They have entered the workforce and they have found it to be so crowded place with older employees who have not retired and generation X employees. One characteristic of this generation is that they work to get more than just the pay check they receive. They want jobs and organizations that are interested in the achievement of their own personal goals. While other generations (generation X and generation Y) patiently wait for promotion or more opportunities, millennials easily quit jobs that they do not like in search of another (Grubb, 2016). The millennials are vibrant and they come with fresh energy into the organization but they also bring challenges. They expect a work to be tailored to them due to their upbringing. They often want just-in-time knowledge and they see and appreciate coaching as a means to such knowledge. Abrams and Von Frank (2014) said the millennials may be under 30 but they have a lot to contribute to discussion. They always desire to be heard

and respected. In terms of leadership style, the strength of the millennials is that they are selfless, rational, and competent in their leadership style. They do not resist change rather they have a positive view about change and see it something desirable. Though they see change as something positive, yet they examine the ideas of other people and their position regarding the change. Their training in collaboration is good for building consensus and community (Abrams and Von Frank, 2014). Johnson and Johnson (2010) argues that millennials don't value the working hours of eight to five set by the organization instead they are more active and involved when they can set their own working hours. Secondly, they understand the rapid rate at which technology is changing as such, they are very interested in developing their skills continually, thirdly, they are so eager to start contributing in the organization as soon as they are part of the organization. Lastly, they become loyal and committed to the organizations soon as long as they feel that the organization supports their goals.

1.4.2. Prejudice on Performance of Older Employees

It is believed that older employees have the attitude of resisting change and due to their advancement in age, they tend to have failing memories and are more likely to be absent from work due to ill health and injuries, which could be the result of their being less energetic and enthusiastic unlike the younger employees (Josef, 2010). Furthermore, there is a belief that older employees perform their job the same way they have been used to and by focusing on the past. Thus, they are unwilling to be trained on how to use new technologies, new processes or new skills. The resulting effect of these are the main causes for their decline in work capacity and performance. According to Grigg and Zenzen (2009) communication is one of the vital tools needed to manage multigenerational employees. Communicating information in multiple ways is one of the most successful ways for handling multigenerational workforce. The needs of the multigenerational workforce are different, while younger employees may desire work-life balance, older workers may cherish retirement benefit more.

1.5. Age Diversity and Organizational Performance

The relationship between age and employees' job performance is likely to be an issue of increasing importance during the next decade (Robbins and Judge, 2013). They argue on the premise that; first, the common belief that job performance diminishes with increasing age. Secondly, the present workplace is characterized by aging population, as such, quite a number of employers recognize that older workers signify a massive potential pool of high quality applicants. Third, the regulations set by some countries that outlaw mandatory retirement age. It is therefore common to assume that as people get older, their skills in terms of agility, strength, speed and coordination begins to decline and job could become boring and also lack of intellectual stimulation can contribute to reduced productivity. On the contrary, empirical studies found out that the age of employees and their job performance are not correlated and older workforce are more likely to take part in organization citizenship behavior (Robbins and Judge, 2013). This commitment is seen more in older employees than younger employees. Older employees often get fulfilled in their work, report better relationships with their fellow employees and are committed to their organization's goals.

Josef (2010) argues that several studies have examined the correlation between age and performance, but no clear correlation could be found between age and performance. It is true that the performance is a function that requires speed and precision with regards to sight, hearing and movement, which implies that the performance of older employees can decline. However, positive correlation can be found in situations where older employees with greater experience achieve higher performance than their younger employees. Older employees have over the years accumulated wealth of knowledge and experience that they come along with in the organizations. As such, organizations that embrace multigenerational workforce can provide mentorship on organization's history, culture, etc. based on the reservoir of knowledge and accumulated abilities. Most organizations that know the benefits of multigenerational workforce are utilizing the older workers to act as mentors to impart their knowledge to the younger employees. The benefits of an age diverse group can only be achieved once organizations overcome those extra communication costs and problems associated with emotional conflicts amongst them (Robbins and Judge, 2013).

1.6. Theoretical Framework

According to O'Flynn, Ricciotti, Nicholas, Lau, Sammaritino and Fisher (2001) the four most commonly used theories of age diversity are; the similarity attraction theory, the social categorization theory, the social identity theory and the human capital theory.

1.6.1. Similarity-Attraction Theory

This theory was put forward by Byrne (1971) and it is used to explain group formation. This theory focuses on people's preference to interact with other individuals who share common life values, beliefs and experiences with them. One reason for this preference is that having knowledge of this shared attitude could help them to predict the future behavior of the other person or people. Similarity attraction theory assumes that people like to associate themselves with those whom they perceive to be like them based on demographic characteristics such as age. It is believed that this attraction helps to promote cohesion, communication and cooperation among team members (Kunze, Boehm and Bruch, 2011). For instance it is possible to find younger employees in an organization pursuing common social activities with fellow colleagues within their age group and even going for lunch breaks with their colleagues who are of the same age group. This kind of attraction and personal ties tends to promote communication and cooperation among them because they are able to share similar life and work experiences with one another and as such develop their similar life attitudes and beliefs.

However, employees who are either older, middle aged or younger than such unified group, may conclude that the reason why they are not invited or accepted in such group is due to their age and as a result may start generating and exhibiting age prejudiced attitudes in the organization (Kunze, Boehm and Bruch, 2011).

1.6.2. Social Identity Theory

This theory was initially formulated by Tajfel (1978) to explain exclusion in the workplace. Tajfel (1978) argues that social identity theory is that part of an individual's self-concept which originates in his/her membership in a social group(s), along with the importance and the emotional importance attached to that group membership. Korte (2007) citing Hogg, Deborah and Catherine (1995) adds that social identity theory tries to explain group membership and behavior. It is a theory that explains the conditions under which a person perceives the collection of people (and themselves) as a group as well as the consequences of perceiving people in terms of specified group. This theory puts forward a negative effect between workforce diversity and performance (O'Flynn, et al. 2001). Turner (1982) said when individuals engage in the process of classifying themselves and others into social categories using most important attributes; it allows them to define themselves in terms of the social identity that links to a particular social group. Therefore, when individuals assign themselves to a particular group, it raises the perceived similarity between their social identity and the identity of the group and the perceived differences between their group and other groups is increased. As a result, such individual does not see him or herself as a unique person any more but now sees himself or herself as a representative member of the group where he or she belongs and that their behavior symbolizes the group's model social identity (Turner, 1982).

1.6.3. Social Categorization Theory

The most popular theory for explaining diversity is the social categorization theory. This is because the theory is used in explaining overt, explicit or easy identifiable dissimilarity (e.g. age, ethnicity and gender) existing between individuals and reveals association of a particular social category (Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007). This theory builds on the assumptions already made in the social identity theory. Categorization involves the arrangement of persons into groups based on such characteristics as age, race/ ethnicity, religion, status or tenure, etc. These classifications become social when a great number of individuals begin to draw similar judgments of individuals based on similar characteristics. This theory predicts that in a work group with outstanding characteristics such as age, diversity will work to hinder group practices than add to group positive performance (Wegge, Roth, Kanfer, Neubach, and Schmidt, 2008). From this theory it is assumed that the degree to which an employee identifies him/herself with a social group depends on the specific perspective of the group. This theory posits that people classify themselves and other into familiar categories in order to predict the nature of subsequent interactions. These groupings are used to define the social identity of self and others such as young, male etc. (Maltbia and Power, 2009).

1.6.4. Human Capital Theory

Grund and Westergård-Nielsen (2005) argue that an organization that houses diverse workforce (both old and young employee) can benefit from both human capitals. The younger employees have the physical resilience and the ability and willingness to learn new things. They also bring new ideas and skills on new technologies into the organization, and older employees have their range of experiences to the organization. They also have the working morale, awareness of quality and knowledge about the intra firm structures and the relevant knowledge about relevance markets and networks due to their years of experience. For the human capital to be fully utilized, social similarity is very essential for group cohesion, interaction and communication. Hence, where there is social dissimilarity between employees, it could result in less communication, dissatisfaction and an aggravated efficiency of the organization. In view of employee performance in terms of age diversity, researchers Schlick, Frieling and Wegge (2013) argue that although older employees have years of experiences, they tend to learn at a very slow pace and they have reductions in their reasoning and memory abilities. As such, they are most likely to have difficulties in adjusting to the new ways of performing their job. This theory also shows that having both older and younger employees in an organization can enhance both employees' and organizational effectiveness as older employees can mentor younger employees and the younger employees can also share their skills and knowledge with older employees in a process called 'reverse mentoring' (Schlick, Frieling and Wegge, 2013).

1.7. Research Methodology

This article used a desktop review of qualitative information from a variety of documents. This made it possible to get insight on various scholarly works by different authors on age diversity at the workplace. The main aim of doing a desk review is to gain knowledge on the area of study by looking at the different approaches by different scholars, hence make an independent argument and conclusion. The review also allows the researcher to go through institutional reports and be able to make a valid description of the subject being investigated. For this article, the study assessed scholarly works relevant to the management of age diverse workforce as well as company reports and websites. Journal articles relating to strategies applied to manage age diversity such as performance management, shared responsibility, leadership initiative and communication were reviewed. The materials were assessed individually in terms of relevance, interest and quality.

1.8. Benefits of Age Diversity in Organizations

As stated in a definition by Dike (2013), workforce diversity management intends to capitalize on the similarities and differences of employees so as to contribute to the strategic goals of the organisation. Age diversity being one of the

construct of workforce diversity, results to various positive outcomes if managed well at workplace and leads to improved overall organizational performance. These outcomes are explained below.

1.8.1. Increased Markets

An age diverse workforce can provide an organization with insight into the thinking of a wide range of customers. As markets are segmented, even the smaller market begins to gain importance. Therefore, attracting prospective customers can be the critical difference between the organization surviving or dying out. Employees working in the marketing section for example, if they form a diverse age group pool can be matched up with diverse markets and can make the customers feel at home with their unique products through their holistic understanding of the customers differences (Martin and Nakayama, 2015). Younger employees would be biased towards markets with young customers who are excited by technologically related products, middle aged employees would do well in markets with investment related products, while their aging counterparts will be best suited to markets related to health and low risk investments.

1.8.2. Team Work and Diverse Ideas

Many organizations have identified team work as a means of attaining the expected task results and ensuring that goods and services are delivered properly (Kennedy and Nilson, 2008). This principle is based on the fact that a single employee cannot be able to carry out numerous task at the same pace of which a team could (Fernandez, 1991). Therefore, in an age diverse team, young employees who are technologically advantaged, middle aged employees who are well versed with the organization work systems and elderly employees with experience and mentorship skills come with unique ideas and provide a different viewpoint towards problem solving to effectively reach the best solution in a short period.

1.8.3. Effective Communication

An organization's with diverse customers can greatly benefit from age diversity because it activates a smooth communication process (Trittin and Schoeneborn, 2015). The customer service section is amongst the most important sections where active communication process is required (Martin and Nakayama, 2015). Organizations that have a wide pool of age diverse employees with skills and experience can provide service to customer in a global basis. An age diverse workforce therefore brings helpful ideas into marketing goods to a highly diverse customer base, and can be creative and innovative than a homogenously aged employees (Esty, Griffin and Hirsch, 1995).

1.8.4. Increased Productivity

Several strategies can be adopted to enhance productivity (Dobre, 2013). One of the strategies is adopting an age diverse work pool and implementing effective age diversity management practices to manage it (Barak, 2016). These practices may include valuing age differences and the skills and experiences that comes with it. In addition, providing age diversity awareness training programs, enables employees to develop a sense of belonging regardless of their age differences though maintaining their loyalty and commitment which assist the organisation to improve its productivity and profits (Kirton and Green, 2015).

1.8.5. Learning and Development

An age diverse work pool creates individual differences in an organisation and therefore a platform for employee self-development (D'Netto, Shen, Chelliah and Monga, 2014). When employees interact with other employees of different age and with different perspectives, it may enable employees from different age group to intellectually socialize and have a view of their workplace in different perspective. The more an employee spend time with age diverse co-workers, the more the employee destroy the subconscious obstacles of age stereotypes, hence inspiring employees to be open and understand the different possible ways of working effectively with different age groups at work place.

1.8.6. Employer of Choice

Companies which accept and manages age diverse workforce become popular by the growth of the company's image. This then makes potential employees to be part of such organizations. Age diverse firms therefore experience improved morale and the ambience of the work environment can become more fun and lively when there is a mix of workforce with different ages.

1.9. Barriers to Effective Age Diversity Management

1.9.1. Unsupportive Attitude of Organizational Leaders

Arredondo (1996) observed that the human resource department of an organization can be a barrier to diversity management initiatives. In his study he found out that power struggle among organizational leaders as a hindrance to diversity management strategies and argues that the HR department or other managers may demonstrate obstructive and unsupportive behavior when it comes to who takes responsibility for the implementation of the respective initiatives. As such they are reluctant to follow up on tasks that support age diversity initiatives because they believe that HR deals with employees' issues and therefore diversity initiatives should be solely controlled by human resource department (Arredondo, 1996).

1.9.2. Age Stereotypes

Stereotypes are set of beliefs people have about the personal attributes of groups of people. It comes as a result of our learning, thinking and remembering the differences between various set of people (Hubbard, 2004). Organizations and the environment at large are still classifying some tasks and responsibilities as suitable for a particular age groups. Stereotyping shows particular bias to a member or group of young, middle or elderly employees in a work place and therefore affects team and general performance. Hubbard (2004) argues that stereotype is a double-edged sword as it may be rational (rational stereotype helps us predict how an individual is most likely to behave or what might occur in a given situation) or irrational (this stereotype is the type we have already formed in our minds without adequate evidence). Irrational stereotype if left alone without being mindful of how it affects the way we categorize, it can cause problem within the group.

1.9.3. Age Prejudice

Age prejudice is a negative attitude towards members of other age groups. Age prejudice can show up during the hiring process, promotion or even during the daily interactions that take place with the work environment. Age prejudice is explicit in generational differences, when the older workers make assumptions about the younger workers and vice versa. Hubbard (2004) defined prejudice as a preconceived bias and can appear in the form of backlash. Once this kind of thinking exist in the organization, it leads to low or poor teamwork spirit, feeling of resentment, conflict, sabotage, etc. and all these negatively affect employee and organizational productivity. Age prejudice can be addressed by managers recognizing issues and situations that cause employees feel devalued and disrespected in relation to their age at the workplace.

1.9.4. Age Discrimination

Age discrimination is a behavioral activity and it is demonstrated in the way people treat individuals of other age groups and in the kinds of decisions they make about others. The fear of experiencing discrimination could make some employees to feel reluctant when it comes to discharging their duties and when seeking promotions. It is the act of treating other employees negatively, differently and unequally because they belong to a different age group. Discrimination in the workplace has the tendency to affect employees' career progress, their trust level, motivation, and their relationship with their co-workers and also their productivity level (Hubbard, 2004).

1.10. Human Resource Strategies for Managing Age Diversity

As the workforce becomes more age diverse and the environment become more open to new ideas and new ways of thinking HR managers in recent years have acknowledged the importance of age diversity and they have seen the need to adopt an effective age diversity management practices that will help organization to overcome the obstacles of age diversity and obtain the benefits of having an age diverse workforce (Mor Barak, 2014).

1.10.1. Age Diversity Training

Diversity training is a key strategy to address workplace diversity issues. As organizations become more diverse, it is imperative that management conduct trainings on diversity for all hierarchical levels within the organization. This enables management and employees to be aware of the elements of individual's difference and how to accept, respect and value the similarities and differences among differences (Scott and Byrd, 2012). Managers must be informed on the subject of age diversity and the practices necessary for achieving it. Employees have to receive the mentoring, coaching and skills they need to be able to work with each other regardless of their age groups. Age diversity training should also help team members to be aware of age stereotypes and the possible effects of these stereotypes on members' interactions. Team members should receive training on how to deal with behavioral issues that arise in teams and how to cooperate with each other. Training in areas like conflict management, communication and decision making is valuable (Powell, 2011).

1.10.2. Focus beyond Compliance

In building an inclusive organization, the first step is to have an understanding that diversity management is much more than just complying with the initiative of affirmative action (Oracle, 2014). Age diversity management indicates a shift away from the assumptions and activities of affirmative action to inclusive management practices that embraces the similarities and differences of all the employees of different age groups.

1.10.3. Promote Diversity from Top-Down and Bottom-Up

Having an all-inclusive culture from all levels and corners of the overall organization is vital for growth. Hence, everyone should be involved including the top management in the effort to embrace age diversity and inclusion. Management should model the behavior they expect to see in the employees by living according to the values of the organization, demonstrating an inclusive behavior and taking active part in all the initiatives that promotes age diversity. This can be demonstrated through delegation of responsibilities and appointment to team leadership of younger employees. The fact is that workers often follow the cue of their top management. Therefore, top executives should be capable of articulating the business case for diversity (Kampf, 2017).

1.10.4. Address Age Diversity in Every Aspect of Talent Management

Managers should address age diversity issues all through the employee's lifecycle. Diversity and inclusion topics should go beyond recruitment and selection and also extend beyond human resource to the organization as a whole. It

should also be considered in every phase of talent management starting from recruitment, selection, on-boarding to workforce planning, leadership training, performance management, professional development, etc.

1.10.5. Encourage Reverse Mentoring

The traditional idea about mentoring normally involves an experience mentor developing a subordinate mentee. On the other hand, reverse mentoring acknowledges that the junior workers also have insights which some senior employees do not have and can benefit from the junior employees (NIWGW, 2009). Management should allow the junior employees to feel valued by encouraging the senior employees to gain fresh insights and perspective from the younger employees as this can help to improve older employees' effectiveness and relevance within the organization.

1.10.6. Diversity Enlargement

The focus of this approach is to increase diversity among employee in this particular case the age diversity pool in the organization. The assumption here is that there will be no need for additional intervention as the new employees will conform to the already existing practices of the organization. Hence, the HR goal for using the diversity enlargement approach is to change or modify the existing organizational culture by changing the demographic mix of the workforce. It is believed that just the simple presence of rising number of mixed age groups at work place will produce a culture change which will bring about the desired outcomes (Mor Barak, 2014).

1.10.7. Diversity Sensitivity

This approach acknowledges the likely problems that are launched by pulling together individuals from various demographic backgrounds to the work environment. It tries to conquer these troubles through diversity training that is intended to sensitize workers to stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination and at the same time, promote communication relationship. The assumption here is that increased sensitivity to age differences will improve performance (Mor Barak, 2014).

1.10.8. Cultural Audit

This approach identifies obstacles that are limiting the improvement of employees from different backgrounds and one that obstruct the cooperation among different age groups in the organization. It involves the external consultants coming into the organization and gathering data from focus groups and surveys. Then an analysis is done and they identify the areas where individuals who are different from the dominant group, sense that they are not allowed to perform to the best of their capacity. With this approach it is believed that the source of the problem is in the dominant group and although change is recommended, such change can only come from that dominant group (Leonard and Levin, 2003).

2. Conclusion

The conclusion is based on the objective of the study that aimed at investigating the role of age diversity in organizational performance. The demographic trends in developed and developing countries, aging workforce and the rising number of young people in developing countries has altered homogeneous work settings in the recent past. Due to these demographic and organizational trends, organizations are faced with the challenges of effectively managing age diverse workforce. Therefore, organizations should embrace age diversity management strategies as this can contribute to organizational performance through enhanced problem solving and decision making. The human resource should formulate strategies to eliminate negative age discrimination climate within the organizations. Age diversity awareness-based training programs should also be introduced to help employees to reflect on their stereotypes.

3. Recommendations

The study then recommends that age diversity trainings be undertaken in organizations because they provide a concrete basis on how to deal with challenges of an age diverse workforce. It further recommends more research be undertaken to establish the relationship between other forms of workforce diversity like cultural, gender and racial diversities on organizational performance. This will stretch the frontiers of knowledge as regards the general understanding of the role of workforce diversity on organizational performance.

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