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How to Reduce Discrimination in the Workplace: The Case of Austria and Taiwan (R.O.C.)

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Abstract

To intervene against discriminatory in the workplace is tremendously important because discriminatory practices have an enormous economic impact, along with a severe impact on psychological health, which can result in illnesses such as depression and burnout. Such intervention requires a multidimensional approach, including the whole organization and a systematic procedure. The aim of this paper is to offer suggestions on how to reduce discrimination in the workplace in Austria and Taiwan. To reach this aim, a qualitative study was conducted. It showed that education, active positioning of companies, leadership and diligent selection of employees, discussion and analysis, psychological support, governmental policies, and aspects of language and talking gender-wise are the most important steps to decrease or eliminate discrimination in the workplace.

Keywords: discrimination, business practices, leadership, workplace

Introduction

Every employee can be faced with “insults, demotions, docked payrolls, and blocked opportunities.” However, if these actions are performed against members of specific groups related to their identities, it may result in workplace discrimination (Cheung et al., 2016; Nienhaus et al., 2016; Plickert & Sterling, 2017; Santana, 2017). Focusing on the aspect of discrimination in the workplace, Ragins et al. (2015, p. 1) claim that employees, who have already witnessed or are aware

of discrimination in the workplace, have a lower organizational commitment than employees who never faced such a situation.

Research on labor market discrimination usually focuses on the situation of a few specific demographic groups. Studies have focused mainly on the disadvantage of female workers in the labor market (Blau–Kahn, 2000), ethnicity-based discrimination (Juhn et al., 1991; Arrow, 1998; Charles–Guryan, 2007; DeVaro–Gosh–Zoghi, 2007), the phenomena of discrimination against the ever-increasing number of immigrants (e.g., Hersch, 2008). A separate strain of research analyzes labor market discrimination for or against older age groups (e.g., Bendick–Jackson–Romero, 1996; Boglietti, 1974; Lallemand & Rycx, 2009; Dostie, 2006; Neumark, 2008). Besides gender, race, and age, there is numerous research based on other observable physical characteristics like people short in height, overweight people, people with disabilities, etc. (e.g., Hersch, 2008; Rosenberg, 2009).

Kamasheva et al. (2013, p. 7) state that discrimination in the labor market, which is based on age, health, or sex, for example, can unfavorably affect the economic performance of a state; therefore, it is tremendously important to develop strategies on how to decrease inequalities. Such a development could lead to an increase of business activity and the quality of life as well as a reduction of social differentiation and unemployment rates.

Regarding discrimination in the workplace, age discrimination is common but widely not recognized as being unlawful in public (Marchiondo et al., 2015). Generally, it can be said that Austria seems to be advanced in regard to the broad scope of protection against discrimination (Publications Office of the European Union, 2016, pp. 5–6). Regarding Austria's legislation, it can be said that Austria is a federal state and neither the bund (federation) nor the provinces (länder) have the power to deal with action against discrimination. More than 30 provincial parts of legislation and five main federal acts exist. Also, attempts to adjust these in 2015 brought solely technical and minimal changes to the content. This illustrates the country's culture, as mentioned in the beginning of this paper, with a high amount of autocracy and regulations. The most important federal acts are the Equal Treatment Act, Federal-Equal Treatment Act, Act on the Equal Treatment Commission as well as National Equality Body, Act on the Employment of People with Disabilities and the Federal Disability Equality Act. Provincial level protection mainly deals with public employment. All provinces, despite those in lower Austria, protect not solely employment but also other aspects such as housing, social security, health, and access to and supply of goods. Moreover, the term of race has been cut out of legislation due to its sensitivity and has been replaced by the term ethnic affiliation

(Publications Office of the European Union, 2016, pp. 6–7; Federal Ministry of Health and Woman, 2006, p. 12).

As mentioned in the literature, the topic of employment discrimination is a rather recent topic in Taiwan (R.O.C) (Chiao, 2008; Yu, 2015). In the last year, an increasing awareness for the protection of ethnic minorities, disabled workers, elderly, and women can be recognized. Due to the country's efforts to re-join the international community, international conventions such as the one of the International Labour Organization (ILO) are going to be incorporated into domestic labour laws. Taiwan (R.O.C) has two separated but correlated legal regimes that deal with employment discrimination. The first one was established under the Employment Service Act of 1992 mainly focusing on the regulation of foreign workers. Article 5 states that employers cannot discriminate against job applicants or employees according to their race, provincial or country origin, facial features, gender, and sexual orientation as well as appearance, former membership in labour unions, or disabilities. In addition, it orders the formation of commissions dealing with employment discrimination to enhance the regulations mentioned above by municipal city, county, and city governments. This has been done all over Taiwan. The second legal regime deals with gender equality in employment and is part of the Employment Act of 2002. This regulation was enforced by a women's right movement due to gender discrimination in employment in Taiwan (Chiao, 2008, p. 141).

How to intervene in cases of discrimination is a challenging topic for leaders. It is important that intervention takes place in the entire organization in a systematic manner. This also includes intervention in the cases of subtle discrimination in order to eliminate eventual backlash effects. However, several possibilities can be mentioned to minimize interpersonal treatment and to enhance diversity in the workplace. Training is highly recommended to provide employees with essential behavior patterns and attitudes related to interpersonal interaction, and positive framing is advisable for employee development programs (Odeh et al., 2017, p. 120). Another aspect discussed in the literature is workplace incivility. This is said not to be limited to location but to have negative consequences worldwide. Subordinates who work in countries with a high power distance such as Taiwan (R.O.C.) "are less likely to consider being ignored by their supervisor to be an act of uncivil conduct" compared with employees who work in countries with a lower power distance. Literature on incivility shows that it affects employees worldwide (Schilpzand et al., 2016, p. 5).

An interesting perspective is the one taken by the Civility, Respect, and Engagement in the Workplace (CREW) program that does not focus on reducing negative interpersonal treatment but rather focuses on creating a respectful

and civil climate in organizations by enhancing discussions and problem solving in meetings included in the process that lasts approximately about six months (CREW, 2017). This type of intervention shall enhance the participation of all employees without classifying someone as an offender, witness, or victim of mistreatment. As a result, a strengthened civility between the participants, including a decrease in negative outcomes such as cynicism and absenteeism and supervisor incivility, can be mentioned (Leiter et al., 2011). Besides training, a focus is set on the aspect of selection process to enhance an inclusive environment. This also includes decision-making. Several authors reveal that individual characteristics such as high self-control, high emotional stability, and low trait anger can be recognized as a basis for selecting future employees, who prefer to not set off exploitation under stress. Furthermore, selecting employees who are actively enhancing a more civil environment is recommended. Besides the selection done by the organization itself, employees also self-select companies they want to work for. This positive cycle makes the preservation of a sustainable climate of diversity possible for organizations (Odeh et al., 2017, p. 121). However, the article further states that leadership requires more than training, development, and proper handling of the selection process (Odeh et al., 2017, p. 121). It is tremendously important that leaders demonstrate behavior that enables the decline of discrimination in the workplace. If leaders present ethical behavior, subordinates can be inspired to display and emulate these values in the workplace (Taylor & Pattie, 2014). Hereof, it can be concluded that organizations should enhance leadership development programs and ethical training to encourage effectiveness and commitment of leaders and, therefore, transmit high-quality treatment among employees and subordinates (Odeh et al., 2017, p. 122; Taylor & Pattie, 2014, p. 608). All these recommendations demonstrate a multidimensional approach to fight against discrimination, even against its more subtle forms. In addition, it is important that employers keep up anti-harassment programs that include “[...] a clear anti-harassment policy, an explicit statement of prohibited behaviours that can be considered harassment, a complaint procedure that encourages employees to come forward with harassment complaints and protections for complainants and witnesses against retaliation” (Becton et al., 2017, p. 3). Moreover, these programs should contain “an investigative strategy that protects privacy interests of both the alleged victim and the accused offender and ensures confidentiality to the extent possible, periodic management training and employee awareness programs that continue to communicate the organization’s position on this issue as well as measures and processes to ensure prompt corrective action to stop ongoing harassment and appropriate remedial and disciplinary actions for offenders” (Becton et al., 2017, p. 3).

It is important to actively work against discrimination in either form because it can have a sincere impact on the psychological health of individuals comparable with mechanisms of the physical health by enhancing the stress level and therefore the level of cortisol in the human body (Miller, Chen, & Zhou, 2007). This can result in illnesses such as depression and burnout that, in the long-term, enormously increase respective costs for companies. However, it must be highlighted that social support in private lives and at the workplace is important in regard to preserving good mental and physical health. This positive support can increase not solely the protection against developing trauma-related psychopathology such as PTSD but also the resilience to stress and reduced mortality and medical morbidity (Southwick, Vythilingam, & Charney, 2005, p. 281).

The objective of this paper is to prepare suggestions on how to reduce discrimination in the workplace in Austria and Taiwan. After the literature review in the Introduction section, the Methodology section outlines the research question, assumptions, and methodology of the research. The next sections reveal the results and discussion of the results of an empirical analysis. The last section draws conclusions.

Methodology

The aim of this paper is to prepare suggestions on how to reduce discrimination in a workplace in Austria and Taiwan. For this purpose, the following research question was presented:

RQ: Which steps should be taken to reduce or eliminate discrimination in a workplace in Austria and Taiwan?

To answer this question, the theory and an empirical qualitative study were combined. Data were gathered through qualitative, semistructured interviews, which were conducted in Austria and Taiwan face to face, via Skype and via e-mails. Therefore, an interview guideline was created and used for interviewing the respondents. The interview was conducted in English as well as in German. The semistructured interview included, on the one hand, questions on basic information, excluding sensitive information such as the name of the respondent, the name of the company, and places that make an identification possible; on the other hand, questions regarding the workplace, the relationship to the supervisor, and questions on discrimination were included.

The interviews were carried out with leaders and employees of all levels, from top management to trainees. This was done to gain broad insight into companies’ structures and

to identify fields where discrimination is considered as a present challenge. This also includes the idea that, in every position, each person has a supervisor or leader and is therefore able to describe the employee-supervisor relationship and challenges that may appear in such relationships. The interviews were conducted between March and May 2017 and recorded for later transcription. Related to the small size of the population of 43 companies doing business in Austria as well as Taiwan, the entire population should be included instead of a selected sample. However, 41 respondents answered to the interview, which can be considered as a substantial number of respondents.

To answer the research question, the most important aspects on the topic, i.e., how to intervene against discrimination, have been summarized from the literature and grouped into four subcategories. These were related to the main category “steps to reduce or eliminate discrimination” and included training, company/leadership, talking, and analysis as well as psychological support. These four aspects are assumed to be steps to reduce or eliminate discrimination and are presented below.

Assumptions

A1: Education

Further training in the workplace is considered to raise awareness about discrimination and leaders and to enhance professional relationships between counterparts.

A2: Company/Leadership

Companies should pay attention to the selection process for future employees and provide a clear anti-harassment policy and strategy that protects the privacy of the victim and the accused offender. Leaders have an influence on their environment and should transmit values such as proper ethical behavior and inspiration to their subordinates.

A3: Discussion/Analysis

To create a civil climate in the workplace, discussion and analysis of challenging situations or sensitive content are important.

A4: Psychological Support

Discrimination has a severe impact on the psychological health of individuals, which can increase in the long-term the costs for the company tremendously. The implementation of a psychological support into the workplace is considered appropriate to support affected employees already from the beginning when problems arise.

The following section presents the results.

Results

To answer the research question, all respondents were asked their opinion on how to reduce or eliminate discrimination in the workplace. To answer this question properly, many questions enlightened the situation of each respondent at the workplace as well as their experience with discrimination at that specific moment. This was done to create proper reflection upon the topic, by the individual, and to enable the respondent to finally give profound recommendations on the topic. However, the recommendations finally can be presented in six subcategories, which are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Recommendations for Preventing Discrimination in the Workplace

Subcategory	Number of Recommendations
Role of the company	17
Analysis and talking	11
Education and training	12
Psychological support at the workplace	1
Government	2
Language and talking gender-wise	4

Source: Authors

As shown in Table 1, the first subcategory includes steps that can be taken by a company or leader, including rules and a framework and structural aspects with overall 17 references. The second subcategory highlights the aspect of analysis and talking with 11 references. The third category deals with education and its impact on reducing discrimination in the workplace with about 12 references in total and the aspect of psychological support in the workplace with one reference. However, beside these four sections, which have been also included into the assumptions, two other topics were mentioned by respondents, as to be important steps to work against discrimination in the workplace. Hereof, the role of government, with two references in total, and the topic of language and talking gender wise, with four references, must be outlined. Answers to these individual subcategories are presented below.

Role of the Company, Top Management, and Leadership

During the interviews, it appeared that respondents believe that employees and leaders consider the company and supervisors as important for reducing or eliminating

discrimination in the workplace. Respondents stated that, if top management would change its actions related to fairer treatment of the employees, a reduction of discrimination in the workplace could be reached. This means that all employees should be considered in the decision-making process.

Respondents further stated that this would have a positive impact on the group dynamic of teams and employees due to equal treatment. Furthermore, respondents highlighted the importance of raising awareness for the topic in the workplace. This included suggestions, e.g., leaders should implement the topic of discrimination regularly in team meetings to show the importance of the topic for successful teamwork and to stay in line with most companies' statements, to officially support diversity and to implement a "no discrimination" policy. Additionally, leaders should remind employees that the main aspect of a workplace is to work effectively together to reach a goal and that this solely can be reached through effective team work, where discrimination does not have an opportunity to occur. Therefore, the mindset of teams must be strengthened. Moreover, respondents mentioned that it is important to learn from previously gained experience and to further develop strategies on how to work against discrimination. Another statement highlighted a recent introduction of a guide for supervisors on how to, for example, talk to employees on the worker level to ensure a productive and healthy working environment. Besides, it is typical in Taiwan for top management to distribute tasks, and the employees must always follow them and not offer opinions. In Austria, the need to invite all employees without making a difference between non-Austrian and temporary workers was mentioned to be important when it comes to discriminatory activities related to the company or the leader itself.

Besides these measures, the importance of structural measures was identified. Respondents stated that a lot can be done to reduce or eliminate discrimination through structural measures, regarding, for example, gender equality. However, it was pointed out, that such changes take place slowly and further take a long time until they reach all distinct levels, especially in large international companies. Respondents also recommended the implementation of a group that deals with this topic into the development plans for the next years, to identify where discrimination has a potential to appear, which groups are affected by discrimination, what can be done about it, what can be learned out of it, and who can be contacted in challenging situations. Regarding human resource management, it was highlighted that personnel decisions should include a so-called six-eye principle where, for example, in regard to the responsibility for the open position, the supervisor as well as HR manager should reach an agreement to avoid hidden discriminatory activities. To be sensitive regarding hidden discrimination

was furthermore mentioned as to be important and to ensure the provision of good working agreements for all employees. In relation to this, respondents highlighted that companies should provide ethical guidelines and a code of conduct including the topic of discrimination and its prohibition. This includes the obligation to report discriminative activities and if accusations are justified, consequences, such as an immediate dismissal, must follow. In addition, it should directly state the support for victims and an engagement of employees and to report discriminatory behavior of colleagues or other individuals. Such ethical guidelines as well as a code of conduct should be further emphasized by the company and provided on its homepage.

Aspect of Talking and Analyzing Discriminatory Activities

However, respondents called for the need of open communication as well as observation of discriminatory behavior. Talking about and analyzing discriminatory activities were mentioned to help create a fresh start, for identifying which role one plays in such a situation as well as emotions and facts behind discriminatory behavior. Furthermore, the question, if it is related to a particular case or a multiple one, has to be asked. Additionally, it is possible to identify if further discussion is required, and that it should be taken seriously. However, it should be identified if the unequal treatment is based upon various aspects such as nationality, skin color, and so on or if it is based on a personal level. Respondents exposed also how important it is to talk in order to reduce the prevalence of discrimination. If someone has a disability, it should be okay to talk about it and to ask directly if it is something temporary or lasting because it is part of life and nothing someone should be cautious about discussing. Moreover, people call for the need to question decisions made by whomever and to keep an open mind to reduce discrimination in the workplace.

Aspect of Education and Training on Reducing Discrimination

Respondents also identified a need for educating and training people from distinct groups to reduce discrimination at the workplace. This is related to the fact that discriminatory activities and creating an opinion are related to learned behaviors, stemming from childhood. Often, such behavior is implemented in societies because multiple generations typically avoid discussing topics of discrimination based on, e.g., skin color. Here, respondents highlighted that workshops or seminars for sensitization as a part of internal education are considered appropriate. Moreover, respondents gave specific details on topics

these workshops should include, e.g., what are diversity, discrimination, and mobbing and the differences between them, as discrimination is a rather large topic, and on how it is displayed on the institutional level and even broader in society in all levels.

However, one respondent also pointed out that there is the need for trainers to prevent a situation in which stereotyping via demonstrating cultural differences may be further enhanced and considered amusing. However, respondents had different opinions on the question if such workshops should be obligatory for everyone. On the one hand, they saw it as a necessity; on the other hand, they mentioned that forcing someone to take part in such workshops may lead to further resistance and may have a negative impact. According to the respondents, this could be solved through advice, communicated by the company, to attend such workshops. Nevertheless, a respondent stated that new employees, especially, should attend such workshops and seminars. Furthermore, respondents considered travelling and the collection of experiences to get rid of stereotypes as to be important, which can be related to education because the individual must be aware of the topic to recognize such differences. Some respondents stated that it should be additionally included in leadership seminars, to give specific recommendations on how leaders can recognize discrimination among employees. Furthermore, respondents pointed out that education upon this topic should already be implemented into the curriculum of the elementary school to properly work against discrimination.

Role of Government in Reducing Discrimination

Regarding the role of government in reducing discrimination in the workplace, two references were made by respondents in regard to the government in Taiwan. Respondents stated that, in Taiwan, it is common that people earn points through their educational life. When it comes to an application in a company, the score gives insight into the educational performance of the applicant and enables a company to reflect on the applicant's past efforts. However, the government, in order to reduce discrimination against people with darker skin, assigns a so-called operational group, including people with darker skin as well as aborigines, from the start of their educational career, 30 points as base, compared with people with white skin, who start with 0 points. This is done to decrease discrimination in the workplace based on skin color; however, it rather produces jealousy in people with white skin and the fact that companies rather employ white people because they must achieve their score from the beginning compared with people with darker skin, who have an additional 30 points in advance. The respondent provided a possible solution

to this situation. The government should change its policy, and all people, regardless their skin color, should begin at the same level.

Role of Psychological Support

The role of psychological support was mentioned by one respondent as important to reduce discrimination in the workplace. The respondent stated that anonymous contact points should be provided in the workplace, which can be contacted for first aid when needed.

Aspect of Language and Talking Gender-Wise

Respondents in Austria mentioned the importance of language and talking gender-wise in German to reduce discrimination in the workplace. Respondents also mentioned that talking gender-wise correctly is difficult to implement in the beginning and is also not supportive for the language itself because it appears clumsy. However, when it is used steadily over time, it becomes automatic and strikes attention if someone is not using it. It is important to implement both sexes into the language, to make them visible, and to sensitize people about the importance of it. This requires lots of training, but this must be done to reduce discrimination based on gender in all-day communication. In addition, respondents from Austria highlighted that it is important to use German regardless of the mother tongue to enable a productive environment and to reduce discriminatory activities between the workers and between the supervisor and the subordinates.

Analysis and Discussion of Results

Regarding the research question, it should be recognized that, during the literature research, four assumptions presented in the Methodology section were determined. Thus, steps to reduce or eliminate discrimination in the workplace are education; active positioning of companies, leadership and diligent selection of employees; discussion and analysis; psychological support in the workplace.

However, our empirical analysis shows that two more aspects have been mentioned by the respondents. Therefore, we included them as additional subcategories, i.e., governmental policies and language and talking gender-wise.

Each of these points are discussed below, combining the findings from the literature overview as well as from the empirical study.

Education

The aspect of education in form of trainings, workshops, and seminars appeared to be the most important one. References were made that discriminatory activities as well as the creation of a mindset do belong to learned behavior because of early childhood and multiple generations. This reveals how deep stereotyping and prejudice are implemented into individual lives and therefore strongly influences personal behavior and thinking. This stays in line with the acknowledgment from the literature that to intervene against discrimination as well as unfair behavior in any form is challenging. However, it is important that intervention such as educational events and activities take place in the whole organization in a systematic manner and further to provide employees not solely with essential behavior and attitude but also to interpersonal interaction as well as positive framing (Odeh et al., 2017, p. 120). Such workshops as well as seminars shall, according to the respondents, include topics such as identifying what diversity is as well as understanding discrimination, mobbing, and the differences among the terms. Moreover, they should explain how it is displayed on the institutional level and in society on all various levels. This displays the need to inform and educate employees as well as leaders upon the topic to raise awareness of the broad range and to enable them to identify even hidden discrimination. This shall be done to ensure a healthy and comfortable working environment for everyone. Therefore, training in the form of seminars and workshops connected to employee development programs as well as ethical leadership training can be outlined as to be tremendously important for decreasing discrimination in the workplace.

Active Positioning of Companies, Leadership, and Diligent Selection of Employees

As mentioned in the literature overview, companies, institutions, and organizations should provide anti-harassment policies and regulations on how to support victims and accused offenders and to ensure them anonymity (Becton et al., 2017, p. 3). This stays in line with references that display the need for a clear and active positioning of the company itself in the form of a no discrimination policy, provision of ethical guidelines, and a code of conduct on how to behave in the workplace. In addition, the need to provide guidelines for employees on how to behave when discriminatory activities are observed was recognized.

It appeared that the support and anonymity of victims as well as that it should be actively engaged to report discriminatory activities were important for respondents. Most respondents talked during the interview about themselves

as a collective at the workplace as, for example, “we have to work for a goal.” This displays the interwovenness of the employees with the company and the high need of companies to ensure a safe and supportive environment to enhance a productive workplace. Furthermore, several respondents referred to an official positioning of the company against discrimination in any form; however, internally, less efforts are made to communicate this message. This leads to the need to implement this official message internally through educational measures such as seminar and workshops discussed beforehand. This further leads to the importance of ethical leadership to communicate and transmit this message properly. The literature mentions the high need for leaders to actively present an ethical behavior that inspires their subordinates to live and display these values as well as good professional relationships between subordinates and leaders to reach a decrease in discrimination in the workplace (Taylor & Pattie, 2014).

This comes along with the claim of respondents that leaders should include the topic of discrimination regularly and shortly into team meetings to show unity with the company as well as reminding employees of the main goal of the work where discrimination has no place. Several respondents presented how important the role of leadership regarding the topic of discrimination is. Leaders have the opportunity to create a positive mindset in teams, to implement strategies against discrimination, and to further develop such strategies based upon experience. However, the literature calls for selection of decision-making skills in leaders. Several authors point out that characteristics such as high self-control, high emotional stability, and low trait anger provide a good basis for the selection of future employees. The selection of employees is considered enormously important due to the possibility to actively boost a more civil, healthy, and safe working environment (Odeh et al., 2017, p. 121). Here, references were made that personnel decisions should include a so-called six-eye principle in which, for example, the supervisor, the one responsible for the open position, and the HR manager attempt to reach an agreement to prevent discriminatory influences on such decisions.

Discussion and Analysis

This aspect is not highlighted in the literature as much as expected, but discussion and analysis of challenging situations and sensitive content are considered equally as important to reduce discrimination in the workplace (Leiter et al., 2011). During the interviews, it appeared that reducing or eliminating discrimination in the workplace is quite an important topic for respondents. References were made toward the need for discussions to reduce the

prevalence of discrimination. In addition, the importance to identify one's own role in such situations, as well as understanding and handling the emotions and facts behind such a behavior, was outlined. Furthermore, it was highlighted that one must be aware if unequal behavior is based upon various aspects such as nationality and skin color, for example, or if it is based on the person itself. However, every case must be treated seriously. Moreover, discussion was mentioned as to be important to keep an open mind. Programs such as CREW, which aim to create a respectful and civil climate in organizations by enhancing discussion and problem solving in meetings, may present an option for companies to properly deal with challenging situations that have a negative impact on employees, leaders, the overall working environment, and productivity of the company. References were made that such interventions should be actively supported by companies to increase employee loyalty and decrease employee turnover.

Psychological Support in the Workplace

Discrimination in either form can have an enormous impact on the psychological health of individuals and increase the stress level immensely. Serious illnesses such as commonly known depression and burnout as well as trauma-related psychopathology and PTSD may arise from discrimination. Furthermore, the literature stated that social support in private life as well as at the workplace is a necessity to preserve good mental as well as physical health (Southwick et al., 2005, p. 281). Contrasting expectations, solely one reference was made, which claimed that anonymous contact points should be provided in the workplace. This discrepancy may be due to a still preserve prejudice that contacting a psychologist is equating to mental illness. It appeared that interviewees reacted ashamed, reserved, and unsure on questions if such a support is available in their workplace and whether one should be implemented. In combination with this, several respondents were quite unsure how such an implementation of an anonymous support should be possible and expressed their concern about how to keep privacy and anonymity. These concerns further display a lack of information by companies as well as a lack of support in this direction. This may explain such a small number of references for this aspect.

Governmental Policies

This topic appeared during an interview and displays how far-reaching discrimination can be considered. A respondent provided insight that displays how governmental efforts to reduce discriminatory activities in the workplace can result in an even worse situation for the ones affected

by discrimination. As described in the chapter of results, a respondent stated that, in Taiwan (R.O.C), it is common that people earn points through their educational life. The score enables a company to gain insight into the educational performance of the applicant and to evaluate past efforts. However, the government assigns, to reduce discrimination against people with darker skin as well as aborigines, the so-called operational group, at the start of their educational career 30 points as a base. People with white skin start at 0 points. This measure was implemented by the government to decrease discrimination in the workplace based on skin color. However, it has had an opposite effect because jealousy of people with white skin is apparent. Moreover, companies rather employ people with white skin because they must achieve their score from the start of their educational career compared with people with darker skin that have additional 30 points in advance. The respondent provided a possible solution to this situation. The government should change its policies, and all people regardless their skin color should begin at the same level. However, this topic needs further discussion through quantitative as well as qualitative data, which were not possible to obtain due to language barriers and lack of appropriate contacts in Taiwan. Nevertheless, it offers interesting insight into how deep discrimination can be interwoven into a country.

Language and Talking Gender-Wise

The aspect of language and talking gender-wise was another topic highlighted by respondents. As mentioned in the literature analysis, in Austria, the topic of a gender-neutral language has received significant attention over the last years (Theißl, 2017). In addition, it is considered important and granted in written work (Wetschanow, 2012). This remains in line with the references made toward this topic. Respondents mentioned that, on the one hand, it is in the beginning difficult to talk gender-wise correctly and that it has a negative impact on the verbal image of the language that appears. However, regular use leads to its implementation as habitual. References were further made on the importance to include both sexes into the language to make them visible and to sensitize people about it. However, it was stated that intense training is needed to use gender-wise talking in all-day communication correctly.

These statements from the literature and results of the qualitative study further present a current challenge in Austria. However, both gender-neutral as well as gender-wise language provide difficulties and the need for training. The resistance of the population for implementing such a change in the language, as to be a significant part that displays not solely the culture itself but also values, norms, and prejudice, is not surprising. Austria is a country with a

preference for avoiding uncertainty, changes like this need a long time until they are taken for granted. In addition, a reference was made toward using German regardless of the mother tongue at the worker level to enable a productive working environment. During the interviews, it turned out that it is a necessity to have good command of the German language to be fully integrated into everyday life in companies in Austria. Good German skills also reveal another hot topic in Austria, which was further enhanced by the current refugee crises. However, this topic must be further enlightened by a qualitative as well as quantitative study to provide meaningful results, which were not possible to achieve in this study.

Conclusion

To intervene in cases of discrimination in the workplace is tremendously important because it cannot solely have an enormous economic impact but can especially have a severe impact on the psychological health of individuals and might, therefore, result in severe illnesses such as depression and burnout.

This paper investigates steps that should be taken to reduce or eliminate discrimination in a workplace in Austria and Taiwan. Although there is numerous research in regard to the topic of discrimination in the workplace, none was done in the field of preventing discrimination in Austria and Taiwan. To prepare the suggestion for these steps, a study including secondary research as well as a qualitative, exploratory approach was done. Based upon secondary research, the authors concluded that education, active positioning of companies, leadership and diligent selection of employees, discussion and analysis, and psychological support in the workplace are the most important steps to decrease or eliminate discrimination in the workplace.

Empirical study partially confirmed the findings from the secondary research and the assumptions presented in the Methodology section. Discussion and analysis were important to reduce and eliminate discrimination in the workplace for participants and received a lot references. Education in the form of further training, workshops, and seminars was identified to be nearly as important for participants. In addition, the active positioning of the company in the form of setting policies as well as providing binding guidelines on how to behave and on how to deal with the topic of discrimination as well as paying attention to the selection process is considered enormously important. This holds

also true for the role of leaders and their immense impact on employees, discriminatory activities, and on the whole working environment. Finally, the psychological support in the workplace was only referred to by one respondent as to be a crucial step to reduce or eliminate discrimination at the workplace.

Besides the mentioned steps identified within assumptions, several respondents mentioned two additional areas that should be considered to reduce discrimination at the workplace, i.e., governmental policies and the aspect of language and talking gender-wise.

However, as with all other research papers, the scope of this work is limited by several aspects. First, it should be outlined that all data presented in this paper are related to the dynamic and fast-changing global environment and represents a specific point in time. However, it should also be recognized that several discriminatory practices are not solely part of a society but more so part of a culture. Several aspects are well known but change slowly in relation to the deep implementation in the cultural setting. This is represented in the international orientation of companies, which is usual nowadays. Even though the global environment is changing fast, the cultural values, norms, traditions, and practices mostly remain or change slowly in contrast with the picture of globalization and internationalization of companies. Therefore, the data may only represent a specific point in time; nonetheless, discrimination will remain in our lives. It may be different in form, execution, and target group and may change over time, but it is a challenge of which people must be aware and that must be fought against until everyone, regardless of his or her skin color, nationality, heritage, religion, gender, sex, disability, or sexual orientation is able to live a free life.

Furthermore, even though overall anonymity was granted to the interviewees, some might have been reluctant to answer personal questions related to experiences with discrimination in the workplace.

Based on the findings, further research is recommended to observe the development in both countries related to current crises, such as the refugee crises, which presently has an impact on Austria. Hereof, the study could be further enlarged to include more companies from Austria and Taiwan and therefore conduct more interviews as well as increase the number of respondents of the survey to make a more in-depth qualitative as well as quantitative analysis possible. Finally, the study might be extended to find out why differences in leadership are apparent.

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Kako zmanjšati diskriminacijo na delovnem mestu Primer Avstrije in Tajvana (R.O.C.)

Izvleček

Preprečevanje diskriminacije na delovnem mestu je izjemno pomembno, saj nima le močnega gospodarskega učinka, temveč zlasti hude posledice za psihološko zdravje posameznikov in lahko povzroči hude bolezni, kot sta depresija in izgorelost. Preprečevanje diskriminacije zahteva večdimenzionalni pristop, vključno s celotno organizacijo in postopkom na sistematičen način. Namen članka je pripraviti predloge za zmanjšanje diskriminacije na delovnem mestu v Avstriji in na Tajvanu. V ta namen je bila izvedena kvalitativna raziskava, ki je pokazala, da so izobraževanje, aktivno pozicioniranje podjetij, vodstvo in skrbna izbira zaposlenih, diskusija in analiza, psihološka podpora, vladne politike, pa tudi vidik jezika in govorjenje o spolu najpomembnejši ukrepi za zmanjšanje ali odpravo diskriminacije na delovnem mestu.

Gljučne besede: diskriminacija, poslovne prakse, vodenje, delovno mesto