THE PRESENCE OF A PREDOMINANT HETEROSEXUAL WORK ENVIRONMENT AND HOW IT AFFECTS THE ORGANIZATIONAL FIT OF LGB INDIVIDUALS

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Abstract- This study had the objective of investigating what was the tie between the presence of a predominant heterosexual work environment and how it affects the organizational fit of employees who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual. Previous studies have revealed how LGB individuals who experience discrimination and bullying has led them to have a negative view towards their job. Other researchers have pointed out how a predominant heterosexual work environment has correlated negatively with job satisfaction and correlated positively with intentions of LGB employees to resign. As a conceptual framework for this study the Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) and the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) provided insight for incorporating the person environment fit, and helped in describing how a person's environment impacted their self efficacy and relates exhaustion and stress that LGB employees might experience in their jobs, respectively. Utilizing these two theories, this study hypothesized that a repressing LGB environment proved to correlate negatively with job outcomes and person environment fit, relating to LGB employees. Data was collected through an online survey constructed combining Waldo's Workplace Heterosexist Questionnaire and Oldenburg's Burnout Inventory. The most important outcome from this study was how LGB employees informed being more exhausted at the end of their workday when compared to heterosexual employees.

Index Terms- LGB, Theory of Work Adjustment, Social Cognitive Career Theory, job outcome, burnout

I. INTRODUCTION

Even though there has been a significant increase toward the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) community within organizations, heterosexism continues to stigmatize employees that identify themselves as LGB. Considering that 9 million adults in the United States identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, and an estimated 25.6 million adults experience same-sex attraction, the LGB community compromises a relatively sizable minority in U.S workforce (Gates, 2011).

Heterosexism is defined as the cultural belief that perpetuates sexual stigma by denying and denigrating any non-heterosexual form of behavior, identity, or relationship, heterosexism includes offensive or negative comments about LGB individuals raging from name calling (e.g., "fag") or referencing "queer jokes" on the job (Herek, 1992). The term heterosexist harassment is used to refer insensitive verbal or symbolic behaviors that prove to be hostile toward nonhetersosexual individuals (Caridad & Cortina, 2014). Heterosexism may involve any thought that everyone is heterosexual, such as assuming a male employee has a wife instead of asking if this person has a significant other, and it may involve any conscious or unconscious marginalization of LGB individuals within the workplace. The outcome of this train of thought presumes everyone is heterosexual, leaving a gray area for other individuals to make jokes or even possible offensive, negative remarks about LGB individuals. Offensive and negative comments additionally introduce a concept known as micro-aggressions.

Micro-aggressions are verbal or non-verbal acts that insult or transmit a direct message toward an individual that identifies with a certain group, occurring sometimes even unconsciously by the person carrying out the negative comment (Kneski, 2013). These messages may communicate to members who identify as part of certain group that they are lesser human beings or that they do not belong to a majority group. Usually, well-intentioned individuals are unaware that they are engaging in harmful conduct towards a certain group (Sue, 2010). For example, some students may use the term "gay" to describe of characterize a fellow student who they find weird, strange or different. In more broad terms, an example of a microaggression can be when bargaining over the price of a certain item, the employee might throw the term "don't try and Jew me down", as if referring that Jewish people are cheap.

Taking into consideration the significant amount of individuals who identify themselves as LGB in the United States, it's important to examine whether the relationship between workplace heterosexism affects the environmental-organizational fit of LGB individuals. Leading to the question, can a workplace heterosexist environment affect the LGB employees overall performance and growth within a company, resulting in the employees leave from the company?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

An estimated 25.6 million adults report experiencing same-sex attraction is quite a considerable minority, at the same time sexual orientation can be characterized as being not observable due to the fact LGB employees can decide whether or no to disclose their sexual orientation in their personal lives or at work.. Every encounter LGB employees face with other

employees leaves them with the choice of when or if to disclose their sexual orientation. An employee who lives in continuous fear that others will find out that he or she is identifies themselves as LGB may have the belief that the discovery may impact how others view them or how the organizations views them in general. This comes without surprise, like other stigmatized groups of minorities, stressors in the workplace for sexual minorities can put them at risk of mental health problems (Fisher, 2011). This preoccupation can drive LGB employees to have more anxiety towards his or herself taking energy away from achieving productive activities (Rocco & Gallagher, 2006).

Negative experiences, as confronted by individuals who identify themselves as LGB, affect their overall well-being in the organization and its relation to the organizational fit of LGB employees. Negative experiences include a variety of discrimination including examples of verbal harassment, loss of acceptance or respect from subordinates. Waldo (1999) brought up how the work environment is an ideal place to study a heterosexist environment and how it affects LGB individuals. Back in 2004, Grant conducted a study and concluded that a heterosexist environment was in fact related directly to mental discomfort and how it affects the psychological well being of LGB individuals. In addition, a little before Grant (2004), Ragins & Cornwell (2001) concluded that individuals who identified as LGB reported being discriminated or bullied made them have a negative stance towards their job. Two studies researched by the William Institute found that reported experiences of discrimination turned out to be common in the employment context, the most recent of the two surveys from 2006 found that 7% of the 662 LGB participants reported being discriminated at some point in their job. The second survey, conducted in 2005 by Lambda Legal and Deloitte, found that 39% of the 1,205 LGB participants experienced some level of harassment in their workplace over the past five years (Badgett, Lau, et.al, 2007)

Regarding job outcomes, research done regarding LGB employees has established that workplace heterosexism correlates negatively with job satisfaction and correlates positively with intentions of employees to quit. Where, vice-versa, supportive LGB policies and climate correlate positively with job satisfaction and negatively with intentions to quit (Waldo, 1999; Ragins & Cornwell 2001).

Similarly as with Waldo and Ragins & Cornwell, Velez (2011) presented data that indicated how a workplace heterosexist environment is positively correlated with turnover intentions and negatively correlated with job satisfaction. Vice versa, LGB supportive environments were negatively correlated with employee turnover intentions and positively correlated with job satisfaction (Velez, 2011).

In addition, Croteau and Lark (1995) had concluded that 44% of professional who identified as LGB anticipated future job discrimination assuming that their sexual orientation were to be discovered, consequently contributing fear of discrimination to be a major issue when it comes to LGB employees sharing their sexual orientation. Fear of discrimination seemed to be an important consideration deciding on how LGB employees

managed their sexual orientation at work. Similarly to Ragins & Cornell (2001), Bilimoria and Stewart (2009) discussed how a hostile environment could affect the performance and morale of LGB employees.

It turns out to be difficult for employees whether or not to decide to "remain in the closet", in turn resulting in stress, anxiety, low team unity, negative self-image, and a low productivity along with a higher rate of turnover (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2003; Button, 2001).

A majority of research that has been conducted previously, such as Lyons (2005) and Velez (2011), has utilized the theory of work adjustment (TWA). TWA is a theoretical framework that directs its attention to the role of the workplace environment and details on how the environment shapes job outcomes regarding employees. The TWA draws a direct relation between the person and environment fit, also referred to as P-E fit, and its outcome variables (e.g. job performance & satisfaction) (Lyons, Brenner & Fassinger, 2005). Depending on the individuals values and environmental values correspond, the correlation could predict an employees satisfaction with their jobs and workplace satisfaction.

This study was concerned focused with the fit of LGB employees in organizations that may have instances of heterosexism, as previously done by Lyons (2005). When identifying the fit of an individual, we refer to what extent are the values of the workplace similar or how they correlate positively with the employee's values. The TWA person-environment fit values how an employee's interest and abilities align with the organizations standards; however the present study will not take the values of abilities and interest into consideration. Velez (2005) also determined how P-E fit was negatively impacted by workplace discrimination while LGB supportive climates were positively correlated to P-E fit.

Additionally, the Social Cognitive Theory (SCCT) provides insight in understanding the career choices for LGB employees, in that it accounts for believes on self-efficacy, expectations, and other environmental factors. The SCCT looks to describe how people's environment influence them to form attitudes that impact their development of self-efficacy, values, interest, and goals, which in turn affect their career choice in the long run (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994).

As discussed, unsupportive LGB environments proved to correlate negatively with job outcomes and person-environment fit. The present contributed to literature by examining the links between workplace heterosexism and LGB supportive climates and how it relates with the LGB employees' environmental-organizational fit (e.g job satisfaction and turnover intentions).

III. METHODS

Sample

Data from 130 participants was analyzed in this study, ranging in age from 18 to 65 years old, being 18 to 24 year olds the majority with 29.2%, following 45 to 54 and 55 to 64 years old the next majority with 20.90% each. In terms of sexual

orientation, approximately 65% percent identified as heterosexual and 35% identified as LGB. With regard to gender, approximately 56% reported to be females and 44% reported to be males.

As far as job level, the majority proved to be Entry Level employees with 28.5%, following Self-employed and/or retired with 27.7%, Middle Management 18.5%, Intermediate with 17.7%, and Owner/Executive with 7.7%.

Procedure

The data analyzed in this study was collected through an online survey concerning the workplace experiences of LGB people regarding well-being, burnout and discrimination. Participants were recruited mainly through social media and personal contacts creating a snowball effect that catered to heterosexual and LGB individuals. In order for individuals to participate they had to be 18 years of age or older and agree with the informed consent form. A total of 140 individuals responded to at least one survey item, however 10 participants had to be removed because they were missing at least 50% of the items used to measure the purpose of this study. Descriptive statistics were used to view the demographics and Chi-Square's was used to analyze data.

Scale Development

The instrument used to measure the employees Person-Environment fit in an organization was created combining some questions from Waldo's (1999) Workplace Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire, and Oldenburg Burnout Inventory.

The first eleven questions corresponded to demographic questions such as gender, sexual orientation, income, race and educational level; seven questions where taken from Waldo's Workplace Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire regarding negative remarks or comments experienced in the workplace, Waldo's questionnaire was available through Chloe House's (2004) research paper titled Out and About: Predictors of Lesbians' outness in the Workplace; the last nine items were taken from the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory, made for college students, and was adjusted to measure an employees job satisfaction and the organizations alignment with the employees values and goals. Oldenburg Burnout Inventory adapted for college students was readily available through Demerouti, Mostert and Bakker's (2010) research paper. The answers for the questions regarding Waldo's Questionnaire are measured on a 5-point Likert scale, raging from 0 to 5, 0 being "never" and 5 being "most of the time"; the answers for Oldenburg Burnout Inventory are measured on a scale ranging from 1 to 4, 1 being "strongly agree" and 4 being "strongly disagree".

The informed consent did not require the participant's signature due to confidentiality reasons, and by continuing the questionnaire the participant will agree to participate in the survey.

Instruments

Within the materials, an email recruitment and a consent form were included in the survey that specified that the participants were not exposed to any physical danger, however they could have encountered some discomfort due to the nature of the questions being asked. It also stated that their participation was totally voluntary and they could either not answer a question or abandon the survey completely, however it would be of great value if they have responded to every question.

The survey used was one structured asking demographics and questions recovered from the Workplace Heterosexist Questionnaire (Waldo, 1999) & the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory.

IV. RESULTS

Prior to running the Chi-square, it was verified that there was 5 or more estimated data in every cell to perform the Chi-square test. Not all of the criteria investigated reached a maximum of 5 in each cell, however a 5 data count in each cell was achieved when linking heterosexual and LGB employees to exhaustion at the end of the work-day. The Chi-Square test showed a Sig. (p) value of .000, which is significantly lower than the specified 0.05 alpha level, indicating that there is a statistically significant difference on level of exhaustion between heterosexual employees and LGB employees.

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance
Pearson Chi-Square	26.559	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	25.526	2	.000
Linear by Linear Association	25.958		
N of Valid cases	130		

V. CONCLUSION

With recent changes under the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution, same sex couples are now allowed to get married, what does this imply for companies? Company policies should now have to be adapted to fit with same-sex marriage couples and considering their current partner to including them in any benefits package the organization might offer to significant others. With the integration of the TWA's person-environment fit, it allowed to construct a model of how LGB employees adjust and handle their work environment, which could allow future researchers to understand and hopefully eliminate any injustices the LGB community faces in the workplace.

The general purpose of this investigation came from the interest of investigating the link LGB employees and how they relate to a predominant heterosexual work environment, with specific interest on how the organizations environment can affect the LGB employees' decision disclose their sexual orientation, decision to remain in the company, and how it can ultimately relate to experiencing more emotional exhaustion compared to heterosexual individuals. Agreeing with previous literature from Van Hoye & Lievens (2003) the present investigation uncovered that LGB employees responded to be more exhausted at the end

of their workday compared to heterosexual employees, indicating that a heterosexist workplace and LGB supportive environments correlated in the direction in a manner they were expected to. This study represents an important extension on the field of person-environment fit regarding LGB employees in the workplace.

Like any research investigation my study presents limitations. The most significant one being is that it has to be considered that the LGB community is diverse in various aspects, which could alter harassment experiences depending on individual differences. Future research should continue to investigate how recent changes in legislature can affect, either positively or negatively, how LGB employees disclose their sexual orientation at work, and/or how the LGB community is perceived by their organization. Organizations should consider sexual orientation as a crucial part of the organizations diversity and the organizations diversity training.

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