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Perceived discrimination against immigrants in the workplace

Influence of personal values and organizational justice

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine how perceptions of organizational justice and social-focussed personal values influence perceived discrimination against immigrants in the workplace.

Design/methodology/approach – A sample of 224 employees of a mental health clinic in Norway completed Schwartz's Portrait Values Questionnaire that measures personal values, Colquitt's Organizational Justice Scale, and scale measuring perceived discrimination against immigrant in the workplace.

Findings – Perceived organizational justice and the social-focussed value universalism contributed significantly in explaining variance in perceived discrimination against immigrants in the workplace. Employees who scored low on perceived organizational justice scored high on perceived discrimination against immigrants, and employees who scored high on the value universalism scored high on perceived discrimination against immigrants in the workplace.

Research limitations/implications – The cross-sectional design cannot determine causality. The direction of the relationship between the variables is founded on prevailing empirical and theoretical contributions in the field.

Practical implications – Cultural diversity training programs should make employees aware of how their personal values and personal justice experiences influence their perceptions of discrimination against immigrants. Culturally diverse workplaces could benefit from recruiting employees who emphasize universalism.

Originality/value – Co-workers' perception of exclusion and discriminating behavior against immigrants in the workplace is critical in order to reduce such unjust treatment. There is limited research on factors that influence perceptions of discrimination against others.

Keywords Individual perception, Racial discrimination, Personal values, Organizational justice

Paper type Research paper

Increased globalization is reflected in the growing diversity of the workforce (Buttner and Lowe, 2015), and it is more important than ever for organizational managers to be able to integrate diverse employees (Mor Barak, 2011; Roberge *et al.*, 2011). Discrimination and unequal treatment of ethnic minorities in the workplace still remains an important challenge (Kahanec *et al.*, 2013; Svensson and van Genugten, 2013). Research has shown that it is not just direct targets of discrimination who are negatively affected; employees' knowledge of ethnic harassment in the workplace has also been associated with damaging health-related, occupational, and psychological



consequences (Low *et al.*, 2007). This effect was evident even when employees were not themselves victims of harassment but had witnessed such behavior or heard accounts of such incidents. Thus, harassment and discrimination in the workplace are highly relevant for all employees. To effectively reduce such unfair treatment, it is important that employees recognize discrimination when it occurs (Offermann *et al.*, 2014). The challenge is that identification of discrimination may largely depend upon individual perceptions (Offermann *et al.*, 2014).

This study focusses on factors that may influence people's perceptions of discrimination against immigrants in the workplace. Previous studies have shown that people's perceptions of unjust treatment of others may be related to personal justice experiences (Lind *et al.*, 1998; Kray and Lind, 2002). In relation to unfair treatment of ethnic minorities in particular, research has found that personal values influence attitudes toward diverse others (Sawyer *et al.*, 2005), and reactions to mistreatment of minorities (Triana *et al.*, 2012). The current study examines how people's perceptions of how they are treated personally in the organization, as well as their personal values, influence perceived discrimination against immigrants in the workplace. These relations are investigated using data from a health clinic in Norway.

Diversity management

One strategy aimed at the inclusion of minorities in employment is diversity management (Wrench, 2007). This concept emerged in the management discourse in the USA in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Blijenbergh *et al.*, 2010; Holvino and Kamp, 2009). Definitions of the concept range widely and seem to suffer from ambiguity and even controversy (Ewijk, 2011). However, it is commonly considered to be a voluntary (Mor Barak, 2011; Syed, 2011) process or tool (Fleury, 1999) aimed at creating a work environment where employees' differences and abilities are valued and utilized (Syed, 2011; Wrench, 2007; Seymen, 2006; Robinson and Dechant, 1997) and hence contribute to create an inclusive (Roberge *et al.*, 2011; Gilbert *et al.*, 1999), effective (Seymen, 2006), competitive (Amaram, 2007; Fleury, 1999), and productive organization (Syed, 2011; Wrench, 2007).

Approximately ten years after emerging in US discourse, the concept of diversity management appeared in the European leadership literature. Governments became increasingly concerned about the inclusion of immigrants and ethnic minorities in employment throughout Europe (Wrench, 2007), and more research in this context was called for (Ewijk, 2011). In Europe, diversity management first appeared in the Netherlands and the UK; former colonial states with a relatively large population of ethnic minorities, before reaching Scandinavia around year 2000 (Holvino and Kamp, 2009). Ever since the concept was established in Scandinavia, its main aim has been integration of ethnic minorities into the workforce (Ewijk, 2011; Holvino and Kamp, 2009; Wrench, 2007). The original justification of diversity management when it began in the USA included organizational effectiveness, competitiveness, and market advantages (Wrench, 2007). Given the challenging nature of discrimination, it is important that diversity management in Scandinavia maintain its focus on social inclusion.

In Norway, the number of immigrants has increased by more than 120 percent in the last ten years, and today the immigrant population constitutes 15.6 percent of the country's total population (Statistics Norway, 2015a). Labor has been the most important reason for immigration in the last decade (Statistics Norway, 2015a). The health sector is one of several sectors with a significant number of immigrants, and from 2013 to 2014 the number of health care personnel with an immigrant background

increased by 7.5 percent (Statistics Norway, 2015b). Moreover, the number of immigrant workers in this sector is likely to continue growing as the demand for health care workers is expected to increase. In fact, projections show a significantly growing shortage of health care personnel toward 2035 (Roksvaag and Texmon, 2012). Thus, successful integration in this sector is highly important. Unfortunately, as many as 50 percent of the immigrant population in Norway report that they have experienced discrimination (Tronstad, 2009).

According to Holvino and Kamp (2009), hope for the future of diversity management lies in finding new ways of ensuring social justice in organizations. Research on justice in organizations has traditionally focussed on how people perceive that they are treated personally (Colquitt *et al.*, 2013), and few studies have included the social perspective of unjust treatment of others. Organizational justice research is, however, still relevant in relation to perceptions of discrimination in the workplace, since employees' personal experience of organizational justice may be linked to perceptions of unfair treatment of others.

Organizational justice

Organizational justice has received great attention in recent decades. In the literature, four different dimensions of organizational justice are commonly distinguished. The first to be described was distributive justice, which refers to perceived outcome fairness – i.e. whether people perceive outcomes to be consistent with their contributions and input (Leventhal, 1976). One of the early influences in this field was Adams' (1965) equity theory, which holds that people in exchange relationships compare their own input and outcome to that of others, and perceive inequality if the ratio is unequal. Furthermore, people will try to rectify unequal situations by, for example, changing their own input or outcome, changing others' input or outcome, leaving the relationship, or changing the object of comparison.

Thibaut and Walker (1975) and Leventhal (1980) argued that organizational justice was not sufficiently achieved merely through perceived outcome fairness, and focussed on the importance of fair procedures. Procedural justice refers to the process of reaching decisions, and the amount of influence that people perceive themselves as exerting on this process. Thibaut and Walker (1975) conducted research in courtrooms and emphasized not only the fairness of the verdicts but the fairness of the process leading up to the verdicts. According to Leventhal (1980), procedures must meet specific criteria in order to be perceived as fair. These criteria entail that procedures be applied consistently, be bias-free, build upon accurate information, ensure the possibility of correcting unfair or inaccurate decisions, conform to ethical and moral standards, and incorporate the opinions of the various groups affected by the decisions.

Interactional justice, promoted by Bies and Moag (1986), focusses on the treatment that employees receive when procedures are implemented, specifically the way in which the management behaves toward recipients of justice. The concept of interactional justice was later divided into two types of interactional treatment – interpersonal justice and informational justice (Greenberg, 1993), where the former reflects politeness and respect from authorities while the second emphasizes information and explanations about procedures and outcomes. Later it was claimed that informational justice should also entail requirements that explanations be timely, reasonable, and specific (Shapiro *et al.*, 1994).

By following central contributions in the justice literature, Colquitt (2001) developed an organizational justice measure corresponding to these four dimensions – distributive, procedural, informational, and interpersonal. The measure was validated in two different

settings, and confirmatory factor analysis supported the four-factor structure. This study uses Colquitt's organizational justice measure, however, the overall score of the measure is applied and not the four dimensions separately.

As is evident from the description above, the task of defining organizational justice in the social sciences has been approached subjectively based on people's personal perceptions, not reflecting shared ethics and norms (Fortin and Fellenz, 2008; Fortin, 2008). Accordingly, few studies in the field have examined employees' perceptions of how others are treated in regards to fairness in organizations (Skarlicki and Kulick, 2005). However, some studies have integrated personal experiences of justice with the experience of others and support a relationship between direct and indirect justice experiences. Kray and Lind (2002) explored how socially reported injustice experiences are interpreted by others, and found that personal experience with injustice facilitated victim empathy. These results are consistent with those of Lind *et al.* (1998) whose study showed that people consider, and give great weight to, their own personal experience when interpreting the experience of injustice victims. Based on this, it is plausible to argue that employees' perception of how they are treated personally in the organization in terms of justice influences their perception of the unjust treatment of others:

H1. A low score on perceived organizational justice will be associated with a high score on perceived discrimination against immigrants in the workplace.

Personal values

Diversity research has argued that personal values influence attitudes toward diverse others (Sawyer *et al.*, 2005) as well as reactions to mistreatment of minorities (Triana *et al.*, 2012). Schwartz (2006) claimed that values serve as standards or criteria that guide peoples' evaluations of events, policies, actions, and people. Individuals decide, among other things, what is illegitimate or justified, based on possible consequences for their treasured values (Schwartz, 2012). Schwartz developed a theory that identifies ten basic and motivationally distinct values recognized by individuals in all cultures (Schwartz, 1992, 2006). These values are self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and universalism.

The ten values can be structured according to several organizing principles, one of which concerns the interests that the value attainment serves (Schwartz, 2006). Five values regulate how one expresses personal interests and characteristics (power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction) and five values regulate how one relates socially to others and affects them (benevolence, universalism, tradition, conformity, security). The last five values are termed social-focussed values, and concern promoting and protecting positive relations with others. People who score high on the social-focussed values will have more resources available for pro-social behavior (Schwartz, 2010). Schwartz *et al.* (2000) examined the personal value's relation to worries about societal problems. Across seven samples from different countries, the five social-focussed values correlated positively and significantly with macro-worries. Macro-worries reflect a pro-social concern about preserving the interest of others. Since people who score high on the social-focussed values have more resources to contribute toward others, and are more concerned about social relations, it is likely that these employees' are more attentive toward how others are treated in the workplace:

H2. A high score on social-focussed personal values will be associated with a high score on perceived discrimination against immigrants in the workplace.

Method

Sample

The sample consisted of 224 employees from a public health clinic in Norway, situated in five different locations. The questionnaire was distributed electronically to 857 employees through their department managers on different organizational levels. The employees who received the questionnaire represent a range of different professions, including psychologists, doctors, nurses, activity therapists, and administrative personnel.

The response rate was 26 percent. In total, 177 (79 percent) of the respondents were women, and 199 (89 percent) had an ethnic Norwegian background. In total, 41 (18 percent) had management responsibilities, and 170 (76 percent) had higher education. The average age of respondents was 42.5 years with a standard deviation of 11.4, and age ranging from 22-71 years old. The response rate was low, but the sample did not differ considerably from the research population with regards to gender and age. This is further elaborated under Limitations.

Procedure

A pilot study was conducted in another health clinic similar to the one where the final data were collected. In total, 14 employees completed the newly translated questionnaire. In total, 12 employees from different professions (e.g. doctor, psychologist, secretary) participated in a subsequent meeting to discuss the survey. No misunderstandings or objections were revealed about the questions on organizational justice and perceived exclusion of immigrants. In the questions concerning personal values, a misunderstanding about an item measuring hedonism was voiced. This was related to the phrase: "He or she likes to spoil himself/herself," especially in the Norwegian version of the question. "Han/hun liker å skjemme seg bort" was interpreted as meaning that they like to make fools of themselves. Therefore, in parentheses the sentence (unne seg ting) was added to the Norwegian version, and (treat himself/herself) was added to the English version of the questionnaire.

The Norwegian Social Science Data Services approved the study. The questionnaire, together with information about the project, confidentiality, and consent, was distributed electronically via Questback (www.questback.com). The clinic manager informed all employees about the project before distributing the questionnaire, and encouraging them to participate. The researcher, department managers, and manager sent several reminders to all employees electronically, in addition to providing information in staff meetings.

Measures

To measure perceptions of discrimination against employees of foreign background, four items from a work environment scale (Sandal and Bye, 2012) were used. These items concerned the following statements: in my workplace, there is little contact between Norwegians and employees of foreign background; employees of foreign background are excluded from the work community; Norwegians and employees of foreign background have different job tasks; and discriminatory treatment between Norwegians and employees of foreign background means that employees of foreign background are disadvantaged. Respondents were asked to assess each item on a five-point scale ranging from 1 to 5 as follows: 1, completely disagree; 2, disagree somewhat; 3, neither agree nor disagree; 4, agree somewhat; 5, completely agree. Cronbach's α for the scale was 0.70. The four items measured employees' perceptions regarding both the exclusion of and

discrimination against employees of foreign background, but will be referred to as “perceived discrimination against immigrants” in this paper.

Personal values were measured using a Norwegian translation of a short version of Schwartz’s (2007) Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ). The items included short verbal portraits of individuals with descriptions of the values that matter to them, e.g. “It is important to him to receive respect from others. He wants people to do what he says.” For each of the portraits, respondents answered the question “How much like you is this person?” on a scale from “not like me at all” (1) to “very much like me” (6). Data gathered in over 70 countries around the world have validated both the contents and structure of the values postulated by this theory (Schwartz, 2006). Cronbach’s α for the scales referring to the social-focussed values were 0.47 for benevolence, 0.40 for universalism, 0.58 for security, 0.45 for conformity, and 0.23 for tradition. Reliabilities of the values are often low (especially for the version with only 21 items), and this reflects the fact that all values are measured by only two items (except for universalism, which is measured by three) (Schwartz, 2006). When there is a small number of items in a set, Cronbach’s α values can be small (Pett *et al.*, 2003). Mean inter-item correlation is not influenced by the length of the scale and may, thus, be a better measure for item homogeneity (Briggs and Cheek, 1986). According to Briggs and Cheek (1986), the mean inter-item correlation values should optimally be in the 0.2-0.4 range, and not be lower than 1. Inter-item correlations for the five values range from 0.13 to 0.42 (mean = 0.26). Despite low reliabilities, research has shown that the values predict attitudes and behavior systematically (Schwartz, 2006), and the PVQ has been used in large international studies, such as the European Social Survey (www.europeansocialsurvey.org). Factor analysis was not performed on the data from the PVQ, because the relations among the values form a quasi-circumplex, and the model is based on multidimensional scaling (Schwartz, 2006).

All of the value scales were centered. Schwartz (2006, 2007) recommended centering each person’s score on the value scales around their mean score on the entire PVQ as a whole to remove individual and group differences in the use of the response scale. These centered value scores reflect individual’s value priorities (e.g. the centered power score indicates the importance of power relative to the importance of the other values).

To measure perceptions of organizational justice, the scale developed by Colquitt (2001) was used. The scale assesses four different aspects of justice perception in the organization – distributive, procedural, informational, and interpersonal. The instrument contains 20 items, all assessed on a five-point scale, where 1 indicates “To a small extent” and 5 “To a large extent”. Distributive justice (four items) describes the extent to which employees perceive that the distribution of resources and rewards has been in accordance with employees’ contributions. Procedural justice (seven items) refers to the procedures used, the extent to which employees felt that they had influence over these procedures and were able to express their views and feelings, and the extent to which these procedures met important criteria (e.g. were consistently applied, bias-free, and based on accurate information). Interpersonal justice (four items) describes the extent to which employees perceive that they have been treated politely, respectfully, and with dignity by their managers as well as the extent to which their managers have refrained from improper remarks and comments. Informational justice (five items) describes the extent to which employees perceive that their managers have been candid in their communication and explained procedures thoroughly, reasonably and in a timely and specific manner.

Cronbach's α 's for the four justice dimensions were high and ranged from 0.88 to 0.93.

Since the dimensionality of Colquitt's Organizational Justice Scale has been tested in several studies with somewhat diverging results (Judge and Colquitt, 2004; Blakely *et al.*, 2005; Maharee-Lawler *et al.*, 2010; Flint *et al.*, 2012), the data were subjected to confirmatory factor analysis to examine its dimensionality in the context of the public health sector (for details see Enoksen, 2015). The analysis showed that the data of this study had a good fit with Colquitt's four-dimensional scale (RMSEA = 0.06, $\chi^2 = 302$, $df = 163$, NFI = 0.97, CFI = 0.99). Nevertheless, the correlations between the four scale scores were high, ranging from 0.49 to 0.78, supporting the conceptualization of organizational justice perceptions as a hierarchical concept that is unifactorial at the highest level. To avoid multicollinearity, a total scale score was calculated by adding together scores from all items of the four scales. Cronbach's α for the composite scale was 0.94. This overall score on perceived organizational justice was used to test *H1*.

Analytical strategy

Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 21 (IBM Corp, 2012). A few values were missing, and listwise deletion was used. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the ability of perceived organizational justice and social-focussed personal values to predict variance in perceived discrimination against immigrants. In order to compare the different variables, standardized coefficients were reported. Triana *et al.* (2015), who conducted a meta-analysis on perceived workplace racial discrimination and its correlates, found that women and ethnic minorities were more likely to perceive discrimination and/or respond more strongly to perceived discrimination. Previous research has also found that age can increase the likelihood of perceiving discrimination (Hirsh and Lyons, 2010). Thus, gender, nationality, and age were controlled for in the hierarchical regression. Intercorrelations, means, and standard deviations for the variables are presented in Table I.

Results

In the hierarchical regression, perceived organizational justice and the five personal values were entered in Step 1, and together explained a total of 15 percent of the variance in perceived discrimination against immigrants. Only organizational justice and universalism made a significant and unique contribution to perceived discrimination against immigrants (see Table II). The three control variables, age, gender, and nationality, were entered in Step 2, but none made a significant contribution. The relationship between perceived organizational justice and perceived discrimination against immigrants was negative, indicating that a low score on one was associated with a high score on the other. The relationship between universalism and perceived discrimination against immigrants was positive, demonstrating that a high score on one was associated with a high score on the other (see Table II). *H1* is thus, supported, while *H2* is only partially supported, as universalism was the only one of the five social-focussed personal values that significantly contributed to explaining variance in the dependent variable.

Discussion

In accordance with *H1*, employees who personally perceived low organizational justice viewed employees of foreign background as more discriminated against than did those who personally perceived high-organizational justice. The connection between personal

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. PDI	1.84	0.80										
2. OJ	3.37	0.78		-0.28*								
3. SE	3.06	1.42			0.06							
4. CO	3.25	0.98			-0.03	0.06						
5. TR	3.34	0.92				-0.12						
6. BE	2.27	0.74				0.22*						
7. UN	2.30	0.62					0.09					
8. Age	42.5	11.40					-0.10					
9. Sex							0.09					
10. Nat							0.26*					
								0.03				
								-0.02				
									0.21*			
									-0.12			
										0.04		
											0.01	
												0.01
												0.03
												0.09
												0.10
												-0.02
												0.06
												-0.10
												0.12
												0.20*

Notes: PDI, perceived discrimination against immigrants; OJ, organizational justice; SE, security; CO, conformity; TR, tradition; BE, Benevolence; UN, universalism; Nat, nationality; *M*, mean; *SD*, standard deviation. Women were coded as 1, and men as 2. In total, 79 percent of the respondents were women. Norway was coded as 1 and all other countries as 2. In total, 89 percent of the respondents were Norwegians. * $p < 0.05$

Table I.
Summary of
intercorrelations,
means, and standard
deviations for scores
on organizational
justice, social-
focussed values,
perceived
discrimination
against immigrants,
and control variables
(age, gender,
and nationality)

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Table II.
Regression analysis
predicting the effect
of organizational
justice and social-
focussed values
on perceived
discrimination
against immigrants

Predictor	β	t	p	R^2
Step 1				0.151
Organizational justice*	-0.23	-3.13	0.002	
Security	0.10	1.46	0.147	
Conformity	0.09	1.22	0.224	
Tradition	-0.05	-0.63	0.527	
Benevolence	0.07	0.90	0.371	
Universalism*	0.22	3.06	0.003	
Step 2				0.157
Organizational justice*	-0.23	-3.11	0.002	
Security	0.10	1.44	0.152	
Conformity	0.08	1.09	0.279	
Tradition	-0.03	-0.40	0.688	
Benevolence	0.06	0.78	0.438	
Universalism*	0.25	3.23	0.001	
Age	-0.06	-0.85	0.394	
Gender	-0.06	-0.77	0.440	
Nationality	0.04	0.50	0.619	

Note: * $p < 0.005$

justice experience and perceptions of discrimination of others might contribute to explain fundamental different opinions about the work environment among employees in the same organization. There seem to be a gap between those who do not perceive justice and those who do; people who personally experience an unjust workplace not only seem to perceive that they personally are being treated unfairly but also seem more likely to recognize the subjection of others to such unjust treatment. Hence, there is a tendency toward perceiving either a just workplace for oneself and others or an unjust workplace for oneself and others. The results further showed that universalism was the only one of the social focussed values that significantly contributed to explaining the variance in perceived discrimination against immigrants. The universalism value refers to understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection of the welfare of all people and of nature (Schwartz, 2006). Employees who scored high on this value perceived immigrants as being more discriminated against than did those who scored low. A suggestion for successful diversity management initiatives is the implementation of training programs (Roberge *et al.*, 2011). According to the results of this study, both managers and employees could benefit from becoming more aware of their own personal values and how these, along with organizational justice experiences, are connected to perceptions of how diverse others are treated in the workplace. Awareness of these influences could be the first step toward recognizing exclusion in the work environment. Herdman and McMillan-Capehart (2010) found that the values of the managerial team affected the implementation of diversity initiatives. The current study shows that values of employees are also important in a culturally diverse environment. An identified approach for effective diversity management is to select employees who are appropriate to the organizations' values and beliefs (Seymen, 2006). Based on the findings of this study a culturally diverse organization might benefit from recruiting employees who emphasize universalism. Sawyerr *et al.* (2005) examined how individuals' value structure influences their attitudes toward others who are dissimilar, and found that respondents who scored higher on universalism and benevolence had

more positive diversity attitudes than those who scored lower, and that those who scored higher on power and achievement had less positive diversity attitudes than those who scored lower. Thus, it seems that by consciously selecting people who emphasize universalism, organizations may get employees that are not only more positive toward diverse co-workers, but also more likely to recognize exclusion and discrimination toward them.

Limitations

The cross-sectional design of this study makes it difficult to draw causal inference. The results can only confirm associations between variables, although assumptions about causal effects build on theory and previous research. Values have traditionally been seen as crucial for explaining individuals' behavior and attitudes (Durkheim, 1893). It is claimed that people make judgments about what they perceive as good, bad, justified, or illegitimate based on possible consequences for their esteemed values (Schwartz, 2006). Thus, the notion that personal values influence perceptions about exclusion, and not the other way around, is commonly accepted. The direction of the relationship between personal justice experience and perceived exclusion of immigrants is more disputed. This study has assumed that personal perceptions of justice in the organization influence perceived exclusion of immigrants, but studies have found support for the postulation that the treatment of others might influence people's judgments as much as personal justice experience. Tyler (1980), who examined the effect of direct and indirect experiences with crime on crime-related judgments, found that personal experience did not have greater impact on people's judgments than indirect experiences. Van den Bos and Lind (2001) conducted two experiments investigating how perceived procedural justice is affected by procedures experienced personally vs procedures experienced by others. The results showed that under some conditions, the treatment of others was actually as important a consideration as one's own treatment in justice judgments. The study relies upon the assumption that discrimination against immigrants takes place in the workplace. This assumption is based on a number of immigrants reporting experiences of discrimination in Norway in general (Tronstad, 2009), not on actual evidence of discrimination in the specific organization where the study was conducted.

The validity of this study may be threatened by the low response rate. A low response rate, although a challenge in research in general (Sax *et al.*, 2003), has proven to be particularly problematic with surveys among health care professionals (Kaner *et al.*, 1998; Bjertnaes *et al.*, 2008; Bjertnaes *et al.*, 2010). However, a low response rate does not necessarily indicate a high-response bias (Templeton *et al.*, 1997; Groves, 2006; Halbesleben and Whitman, 2013). In order to assess the potential non-response bias, known characteristics of the sample were compared to another data source on the same population. The respondents did not differ significantly from the research population in terms of gender and age. The sample consisted of 79 percent women, and the total population of the clinic consists of 76 percent women. Both in the research population and among the respondents, the largest age group was 40-50 years, the second largest was 50-60 years, and the third was 30-40 years. Managers were overrepresented in the sample, constituting 7 percent of the research population (employees of the entire clinic) and as much as 18 percent of the respondents. Managers may have felt more compelled to answer the survey, which may have affected the data to some extent. It was not possible to identify the exact number of employees of foreign background in the clinic, but the contact person from the clinic estimated this number to be close to 30 percent.

Only 10 percent of respondents, however, had a foreign background. This is worth noting as part of the survey concerned this group in particular. Since the data were collected from one medium-sized organization, background variables such as profession and unit size were not included in the questionnaire to protect the anonymity of respondents. The low reliabilities of the personal value scales may also threaten the validity of the study.

Conclusion

The findings of this study show that employee's personal justice experience and their value-orientation influence perceptions of discrimination against immigrants in the workplace. Universalism was the only of five social-focussed values that contributed significantly in explaining variance in perceived discrimination. Whether discriminating practices and behaviors are coming from individuals or are part of a structural problem in the organization, it is essential that co-workers become aware of such unfair treatment. In order to mobilize an effective response to discrimination, the support of other employees is essential (Goldman, 2001). An important condition for co-workers' support is their perception of the treatment of others; they must perceive that others are being treated unfairly in order to react. The co-workers' reactions play a significant role in encouraging victims of unfair treatment to seek retribution; furthermore, if employees do not accept the unfair treatment of others as valid, then these victims are more likely to become isolated (Kray and Lind, 2002). Although employees' perception of discrimination against co-workers does not necessarily imply that they will take action against it, the chance of a reaction is unquestionably greater than if such discrimination goes unrecognized. Moreover, when values that are central to people are activated, in example by a situation in which the value is especially relevant or challenged, it may lead to, and affect, behavior (Verplanken and Holland, 2002). Thus, it is plausible that people who emphasize the value universalism are also more likely to take action against discrimination when they perceive that it is happening in the organization.

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