Principi di pari opportunità e non discriminazione sul lavoro: sfide e complessità

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Sommario

Questo articolo è incentrato sui contributi psicologici e le sue implicazioni per le disuguaglianze sul posto di lavoro rispetto alle minoranze e ai gruppi minoritari, in particolare per quanto riguarda il genere, l'orientamento sessuale e l'identità di genere. Il contributo offre anche un focus sui risultati relativi ai supporti contestuali sul posto di lavoro per i dipendenti LGBTIQA+.[2] L'Ufficio della Consigliera Parità della Città Metropolitana di Firenze è attivo per alimentare processi proattivi che facilitino i principi di pari opportunità e non discriminazione sul lavoro in *strength-based prevention perspectives*, comprese le prospettive di prevenzione primaria, secondaria e terziaria.

Parole chiave

Pari opportunità, Non discriminazione sul lavoro, Genere, LGBTIQA+, Disuguaglianze sul posto di lavoro, Minoranze e gruppi minoritari, *Strength-based prevention perspectives*.

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[2] Nella letteratura scientifica: Webster et al. (2017) utilizzano l'acronimo LGBT, Moretti (2023) usa l'acronimo LGBTI, Imsirovic et al. (2023) impiegano l'acronimo LGBTQ+, Priola e O'Shea (2023) ricorrono all'acronimo LGBT*. La scelta dell'autore è stata quella di uniformarsi all'acronimo LBGTIQA+ del progetto RE.A.DY e della Regione Toscana. Link: https://www.regione.toscana.it/prevenzione-e-contrasto-alle-discriminazioni-determinate-dall-orientamento-sessuale-e-identit%C3%A0o-di-genere (consultato il 6 giugno 2023).

Principles of Equal Opportunities and Non-discrimination at Work: Challenges and Complexities

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Abstract

This article is particularly focused on psychological contributions and their implications for inequalities in the workplace with regard to minorities and minoritized groups especially regarding gender, sexual orientation and gender identity. This contribution also offers a focus on results relative to workplace contextual supports for LGBTIQA+[2*] employees. On this basis, the office of the Equality Councillor of the Metropolitan City of Florence is active in nurturing proactive processes facilitating the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination at work in strength-based prevention perspectives, including primary, secondary and tertiary prevention perspectives.

Keywords

Equal opportunities, Non-discrimination at work, Gender, LGBTIQA+, Inequalities in the workplace, Minorities and minoritized groups, Strength-based prevention perspectives.

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[2]   In scientific literature: Webster et al. (2017) uses the acronym LGBT, Moretti (2023) uses the acronym LGBTI, Imsirovic et al. (2023) use the acronym LGBTQ+, Priola and O'Shea (2023) use the acronym LGBT*. The author has chosen to adopt the acronym LBGTIQA+ used in the RE.A.DY project and by the region of Tuscany. Link: https://www.regione.toscana.it/prevenzione-e-contrasto-alle-discriminazioni-determinate-dall-orientamento-sessuale-e-identit%C3%A0-di-genere

Evidence from the Eurobarometer Programme on LGBTIQA+ using Small Area Estimation

Even though equal opportunities at work are encouraged by European legislation, evident discrimination has still emerged in Europe. In this regard, it is important to study public opinion towards discrimination of LGBTIQA+ communities in the workplace in Europe.

Moretti (2023) emphasized that public opinion towards discrimination of LGBTIQA+ communities in employment in Europe was studied at a country-level and that it is essential to examine this topic at a sub-national level. Specifically, three indicators related to gender identity, sexual orientation, and being intersex were used. The analyses were conducted at a regional level using small area estimation.

Results of the study by Moretti (2023) showed a great between-region variability for both gender identity and intersex indicators and smaller variability for sexual orientation indicator. The opinion regarding sexual orientation in the workplace is more homogenous in different European regions compared to the other two indicators. In countries where discrimination towards LGBTIQA+ people is widespread, sometimes public opinion against LGBTIQA+ people is lower in comparison to other countries.

An individual could have a low level of discrimination towards LGBTIQA+ people for two reasons: on the one hand, LGBTIQA+ people could effectively be suffering less discrimination, on the other hand an individual could be uninterested or not know or not have information about LGBTIQA+ discrimination. In this second case, there is a low level of social acceptance of LGBTIQA+ people. Discrimination towards LGBTIQA+ people could thus remain invisible and the erroneous belief is formed that discrimination against such minorities is not a widespread problem.

The index developed by Moretti (2023) is a regional estimator that allows us to detect the differences among different regions and in future could enable future contextualized research on public opinion towards discrimination of LGBTIQA+ people. In fact, in future studies, the three indicators used by Moretti (2023) could be related to other types of discrimination and attitudes towards LGBTIQA+ and over time. These estimates produced by small area evaluations provide essential information to policy makers in relation to public opinion on LGBTIQA+ people.

Regarding the results of the Eurobarometer for Italy (Moretti, 2023), at a country level of analysis, compared to other European Countries, our country showed a low level of public opinion of perceived discrimination towards LGBTIQA+ communities for sexual orientation and being intersex and a medium level of public opinion of perceived discrimination towards LGBTIQA+ communities for gender identity. At a sub-national level, a higher level of public opinion of perceived discrimination towards LGBTIQA+ communities emerged for all

three indicators (gender identity, sexual orientation, and being intersex) in the regions of Southern Italy and North Western Italy compared to other areas of our country (Moretti, 2023).

Impact of discrimination towards LGBTIQA+ people in the workplace: new directions for research

Research on the LGBTIQA+ community is relatively new. In recent years, several researchers have developed a greater interest in the reality of LGBTIQA+ individuals in the workplace, particularly on discrimination at work and the management of sexual diversity (Ng & Rumens, 2017; Ozeren, 2014). Recently, a systematic review was carried out with the aim of analysing the impact of direct and indirect discrimination towards LGBTIQA+ individuals in the workplace (Imsirovic, Sénéchal, & Larivée, 2023).

The results showed that direct discrimination on individuals regards five categories: 1) hiding one's sexual orientation or gender identity, 2) experiencing financial consequences, 3) experiencing mental or physical health problems, 4) being excluded, and 5) feeling discomfort. For indirect discrimination four effects emerged on individuals: 1) hiding sexual orientation or gender identity, 2) experiencing negative emotions, 3) mental or physical health problems, and 4) lack of promotion. Furthermore, direct discrimination emerged as having an impact on lack of commitment and satisfaction, lack of trust in the organization, loss of workforce, decreased performance, and harassment.

On the other hand, indirect discrimination generated a deterioration of the work climate in organizations (Imsirovic Sénéchal & Larivée, 2023). These results opened interesting perspectives for future research on discrimination towards LGBTIQA+ individuals in the workplace.

Psychology and its implications for workplace inequality

The work by Flechter and Beauregard (2022) recently offered a focus on research that examined stereotypes and discrimination regarding minorities and minoritized groups. A better comprehension of the dynamics of the diverse workforce has allowed us to advance, facilitating opportunities for research in psychology to meaningfully address inequalities at work. An agenda for future psychological research was established for filling methodological gaps and for connecting literature on diversity in associated disciplines such as human resource management, human resource development, and organizational studies. The authors delineated the relevance of strengthening research on gender at

work through a positive perspective for workers and organizations (Warren et al., 2019). Organizations can flourish thanks to diversity and inclusion.

A model of organizational flourishing proposed by Warren et al. (2019) highlights four aspects: excellent performances of workers and teams associated to a strong financial health and sustainability; social integration of different workers associated to healthy organizational culture; workers' well-being linked to interest for quality of life of all workers; and moral and ethical commitment for social justice linked to organizational virtuousness.

Workplace contextual supports for LGBTIQA+ employees: results and agenda for future research

The meta-analysis by Webster et al. (2017) shows how in the last decade there has been an increase in the exposure of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. The problems experiences by LGBTIQA+ employees in the workplace have become the focus of attention for organizational researchers. From analysis of the literature it emerged that empirical relationships regarding the contribution of workplace variables on the working lives of LGBTIQA+ workers were not studied cumulatively.

In this regard, Webster et al. (2018) offered a comprehensive review and meta-analysis relative to the outcomes related to three workplace contextual supports: Formal LGBTIQA+ policies and practices; LGBTIQA+ supportive climate; and Supportive workplace relationships. Outcomes were articulated in four groups: 1) Work attitudes; 2) Psychological strain; 3) Disclosure; and 4) Perceived discrimination.

Summarizing the principal findings of this contribution by Webster et al. (2017), it is possible to underline the following results: a) Formal policies and practices offered the weakest contribution to all four outcomes; b) Supportive workplace climate showed the strongest relative contribution to both disclosure and discrimination, and the second-strongest relative contribution to work attitudes and strain; c) LGBT-supportive workplace climate showed relatively strong findings with regard to work attitudes and strains; and d) Supportive workplace relationships offered the strongest contribution to work attitudes and well-being compared to the other types of workplace support.

Regarding point a) of the results, formal policies and practices, although they are the weakest predictors of all four outcomes, it does not mean that formal policies and practices are irrelevant, but that they are not sufficient to safeguard LGBTIQA+ workers (Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007). It is not merely the existence of formal policies and procedures that is important but the extent to which such policies and procedures are involved in the organizational culture.

Regarding point b), it is possible to emphasize that differently from formal policies and practices that simply embrace a set of values, beliefs, and behaviours, the perception of these aspects is more relevant to LGBTIQA+ workers, particularly in relation to their disclosure and perceptions of discrimination.

In relation to point c), it is possible to underline that favourable job attitudes and even well-being emerged in presence of an agreement between work environment characteristics and characteristics of the workers.

In this framework, LGBTIQA+-supportive workplace climate is considered an organizational characteristic whereas LGBTIQA+ identity is considered a worker characteristic. Regarding point d) focused on the value of workplace relationships, it is possible to highlight that social support offers fundamental coping resources that can help in alleviating the negative consequences of stressors that are perceived in the workplace. Social support also makes an essential contribution in directly decreasing specific stressors (e.g., social isolation) for LGBTIQA+ workers. The most relevant result of the study by Webster et al. (2017) is the great positive contribution of supportive workplace relationships on the work attitudes and well-being of LGBTIQA+ workers.

Webster et al. (2017) suggested that future research needs to focus on the relationships between a micro perspective and a macro perspective. The micro perspective is centred on variables detected at an individual level. Instead, the macro perspective, being centred on variables combined at a company or industry level and regarding the implementation of LGBTIQA+ supportive policies and practices, offers advantages to the organization compared to its competitors, comprising improved performance and business. Webster et al. (2018) also suggested practical implications.

Companies that do not sustain LGBTIQA+ workers have negative public relations. Thus, organizations desiring to be recognized as «best-in-class» for diversity and inclusion could gain an advantage from sustaining in a proactive way LGBTIQA+ workers instead of delaying with the hope of attaining formal legislation that safeguards LGBTIQA+ workers from discrimination.

Webster et al. (2018) emphasized how true inclusivity begins with the attitudes, well-being and experiences of workers. Companies might gain an advantage from asking LGBTIQA+ workers about their perceptions of the organizational climate and from implementing active initiatives that really encourage attitudinal change in workers who may have erroneous beliefs about the LGBTIQA+ community (or who are merely uninformed about the concerns of the LGBTIQA+ community in general).

In this regard, managers could increase commitment at an organizational level in order to realize a truly inclusive workplace culture instead of cultures exclusively focused on eradicating bias from the workplace.

Towards true LGBTIQA+ inclusion

On the basis of research, discrimination against LGBTIQA+ people emerged as lasting and omnipresent, influencing work organizations (Colgan & Rumens, 2018), life at home (Romero, Golberg, & Vasquez, 2020), quality of life and basic human rights (Katz-Wise & Hyde 2012). Human, social and economic rights of LGBTIQA+ people continue to be limited all over the world.

Inclusion can be defined as different from equality and diversity (Priola & O'Shea, 2023). Equality regards legislation with the aim of facing discrimination and harassment, promoting equal opportunities for all. Equality is thus relative to equal treatment whereas diversity refers to differences among individuals. The diversity approach is focused on human rights and individual freedom, respecting and valuing diversity among people. Instead, inclusion regards the extent to which individuals feel worthy, accepted and can entirely contribute in decision-making, focusing thus on outcomes. Inclusivity also includes the possibilities of access to development opportunities for individuals within organizations and society.

Research has limitedly studied inclusion and the social and solidarity economy (SSE), which aims to prioritize social profitability over purely financial profits (Priola & O'Shea, 2023). Priola and O'Shea (2023) suggest how social and solidarity economy organizations and enterprises (SSEOEs) could open possibilities to potentially promote the economic and social inclusion of LGBTIQA+ people. SSEOEs operate by offering services and goods to satisfy necessities of specific groups.

Regarding LGBTIQA+ inclusion, this type of organization and enterprise could make an essential contribution in creating awareness of the oppression and difficulties that LGBTIQA+ individuals experience, allowing us to extend our willingness to change this situation.

Conclusions

Our concluding reflections take inspiration from the words of Mark Savickas: «We are both the painter and the painting… We form and construct ourselves and career/profession is a bridge to society, to the community, to participate in the community» (Savickas, 2006). These words are not only valid for each individual in building their career on a personal level, but also apply to each organizationin building its inclusive culture in the world of work.

It is relevant not only to facilitate compliance of what is legally protected but also to nurture proactive processes facilitating the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination at work in strength-based prevention perspectives

(Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2021), including primary, secondary and tertiary prevention perspectives (Caplan, 1964; Di Fabio & Kenny, 2016; Hage et al., 2007). These proactive processes aim to promote diversity management as richness and inclusivity as flourishing for enhancing sustainable development (Di Fabio, 2017a, 2017b; Di Fabio & Rosen, 2018, 2020) in relation to work environments.

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