

The Development of the Employee Resource Groups Scale (ERGS)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper was to develop the Employee Resource Groups Scale (ERGS) that measures employee perceptions of the efficacy of employee resource groups. The study aimed to develop a perceptions of employee resource groups scale. The authors recruited data from 268 participants from a for-profit organization in the United States. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to examine the factor structure of the ERGS. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of each factor. The EFA identified two factors: Employee Resource Group Outcomes (9 items), and Supervisory Support (2 items). There is a growing body of research that examines the activities and the efficacy of employee resource groups within for-profit organizations. The ERGS is a reliable measuring instrument that can capture perceptions of the outcomes of employee resource groups and how supervisory support influences the employees' participation in the employee resource groups.

KEYWORDS:

Diversity, Employee Resource Groups, Scale Development, Workplace

INTRODUCTION

Organizations are increasingly aware of the need to recruit, retain, and develop an employee base that is demographically diverse. Approaches to navigating diversity and equity issues vary and organizations have utilized numerous strategies that include targeted recruitment and retention plans, mentoring programs, implementing equitable policies, public support of social issues, professional development activities, and increasingly, supporting employee resource groups (ERG). As ERGs gain visibility, they have become a recruitment tool and a way to provide evidence of an organization's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity. There are calls to better understand ERGs' efficacy and outcomes related to employee development and organizational processes. To address the research gap, this study was conducted to develop the Employee Resource Groups Scale (ERGS) to understand employee perceptions of the efficacy of ERG.

The Development of the Perceptions of Employee Resource Groups Scale (PERGS)

Organizations are increasingly aware of the need to recruit and retain a diverse employee base. In response, organizations have implemented a variety of diversity and inclusion strategies designed

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to create equitable cultures and to support individuals from historically marginalized or under-represented groups (Jain & Lobo, 2012; Welbourne et al., 2017). This directive, in part, is a response to demographic shifts within the US and globalization of the workforce. The 2020 Census data illustrated ongoing demographic changes within the US population. The White alone population remains the largest demographic group with 204.3 million respondents. Since the 2010 census, this group saw a decrease in the overall share of the population by 8.6%. The Hispanic or Latino (of any race) grew by 23% since 2010 and was reported to be 62 million in 2020. The Black or African American population increased to 12.1% (47 million) of the US population. The Asian alone population was reported to be 24 million, the American Indian and Alaska Native population was listed as 9.7 million, and the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander was listed at 1.6 million. Multiracial Americans had a substantial increase, moving from 9 million people in 2010 to 33.9 million people in 2020. Organizational leaders have recognized the importance of increasing numerical diversity of the employee base, an important first step. However, in order to create an organizational environment that values employees and integrates their perspectives and experiences, organizations must foster a culture of inclusivity.

Formal organizational support of diversity and inclusion policies are necessary to create a culture that is supportive of employees from under-represented groups. Employees who work in organizations that support diversity in meaningful ways are more committed and have higher levels of job satisfaction (Bell et al., 2011, p. 133). Without effective integration strategies, employees may have negative experiences within their workplace that can result in separation from the organization. Employees from under-represented groups may experience interactions based on stereotypical thinking and simplified views of their identity group (Nishii, 2013). They may be silenced by dominant organizational norms. McFadden and Crowley-Henry (2017) found that LGBTQ employees experience heteronormative views, organizational silence, and stigma regarding their identity group. Individuals believe speaking up or being openly LGBTQ places them in a precarious situation. For members of the LGBTQ community, a willingness to be out in the workplace is reflective of the group's perceptions of the organization's climate (Quartey et al., 2018). Failure to attend to organizational diversity and inclusion has been shown to result in employee disengagement and higher levels of absenteeism leading to potential job termination (Avery, McKay, & Wilson, 2007). Organizational cultures that exhibit a positive orientation to diversity and take active steps towards integration will see increased employee satisfaction, decreased absenteeism (Avery, McKay, Wilson, & Tonidandel, 2007), increased productivity, and a stronger commitment to the organization (Avery, McKay, & Wilson, 2007).

Organizations can facilitate the development of a more inclusive climate that supports employees from under-represented groups. Mechanisms can include focused recruitment and retention plans and supplier diversity initiatives (Gould et al., 2020). It can also include the creation of anonymous complaint systems and safe spaces for under-represented groups, allocation of adequate resources for issues unique to these groups, and inclusion of relevant training and development materials in human resources (Benschop et al., 2015). Introducing non-discriminatory policies and procedures can foster a culture of inclusion for minority employees (Bell et al., 2011). Another approach is the support of employee resource groups (ERGs). ERGs support individuals from historically marginalized or under-represented populations based on social-identities that include race, ethnicity, gender, ability levels, and sexual orientation. These groups have been shown to have significant benefit in creating opportunities for professional development, mentoring, and creating spaces for community building (Colgan & MacKearney, 2012; Githens & Aragon, 2009; Green, 2011). At an organizational level, ERGs give employees voice and highlight issues that impact their membership. They also work to increase broader awareness of their identity group through educational activities and aim to shift organizational culture (Green, 2018). They may also convince their organizations to publicly support relevant social issues (Maks-Solomon & Drewey, 2021).

There are questions regarding the efficacy of ERGs and their ability to facilitate meaningful change. The presence of ERGs can create an illusion of fair treatment that is not enacted within

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