Downloaded from UvA-DARE, the institutional repository of the University of Amsterdam (UvA)
http://dare.uva.nl/document/458319

File ID	458319
Filename	Chapter one: General introduction

SOURCE (OR PART OF THE FOLLOWING SOURCE):

Type	Dissertation
Title	Perceived discrimination: why applicants and employees expect and perceive discrimination
Author	N. Abu Ghazaleh
Faculty	Faculty of Economics and Business
Year	2012
Pages	120
ISBN	978-94-6191-501-6

FULL BIBLIOGRAPHIC DETAILS:
http://dare.uva.nl/record/430714

Copyright

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use.

UvA-DARE is a service provided by the library of the University of Amsterdam (http://dare.uva.nl)

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

History, purposes, and guideline

Over the past decades, the number of immigrants in Dutch society has increased and the Netherlands has become more culturally diverse. The country has a population consisting of almost 16.6 million people of whom currently 20.6% are ethnic minorities, both Western and non-Western (that is, they were born outside of the Netherlands or have at least one parent born outside of the Netherlands (CBS, 2012).

A consequence of this increase in the number of immigrants is that the composition of the labor force is changing. These changes imply that organizations will need to become more successful both at recruiting employees from diverse ethnic backgrounds and at having them stay in the workforce. In other words, attracting and hiring as well as retaining and motivating these employees are challenges for many of today's firms. However, at present ethnic minority groups are underrepresented in most firms, people from these groups mostly work in jobs at the lower end of the labor market, and a relatively large percentage of people from minority groups is unemployed (Te Nijenhuis & Van der Flier, 2005; McKay & Avery, 2006). Even when restricting the comparison to those in the majority group that have the same level of education and are in similar lower skilled jobs, ethnic minorities are still underrepresented in the workforce compared to the Dutch majority (CBS, 2010).

However, even though ethnic minorities are currently underrepresented, different stakeholders (such as politicians, minority groups and employers) agree that it is important that the proportion of these groups in the workforce increases to reflect the composition of Dutch society. The society, not only in the Netherlands but also worldwide is constantly diversifying due to globalization; consequently ethnic minorities tend to include a substantial portion of many companies' workforce and clientele worldwide (Avery &Mc Kay, 2010). The problems, such as perceptions of discrimination at work that may arise need to be addressed.

Until today, relatively little psychological research exists focusing on the treatment of minority applicants and employees in the workforce (Dietz, 2010). One obvious problem for minority applicants is the issue of the potential occurrence of discrimination. Recently, increasing our understanding of individuals' perceptions of discrimination has been noted as a worthwhile extension of the discrimination literature (e.g. Harris,

Lievens & van Hoye, 2005; Avery, Mc Kay & Wilson, 2008; Banerjee, 2008). Perceptions of discrimination can occur even if actual discrimination did not occur in a specific instance and these perceptions are of importance as their consequences are often just as real as those of objective discrimination. These consequences may include decreased productivity, organizational commitment, job satisfaction or legal action (see Mays et al., 1996; Sanchez & Brock, 1996; Ensher et al., 2001; Allen & Keaveny, 1985; Banerjee, 2008). The goal of the research presented in this dissertation is to contribute to the topics of discrimination, recruitment and selection, and diversity by enhancing insight in applicants' as well as employees' perceptions of discrimination and the psychological antecedents that trigger these perceptions. With the results of this dissertation we attempt to contribute to the diminishment of these perceptions of discrimination.

Understanding how individuals perceive discrimination and getting a sense of how prevalent the occurrence may be both among minority and majority groups is important. If we do not understand the antecedents, the multitude of occurrence, the differences between groups and the consequences, we cannot attempt to prevent the existence of discrimination. For example, discrimination could be perceived far more often for one group than another group, but the proportion of affected members could be identical for the two groups (Avery et al., 2008). Therefore, in the research presented here we focus on the perceptions of discrimination in the recruitment setting as well as within an organization and beyond ethnicity we also investigate several potential psychological antecedents, such as attribution style, and several other factors that might affect the prevalence of perceptions of discrimination, such as getting the job or not and the presence of a diversity policy and ethical leader behavior in the organization.

This dissertation includes several studies of perceived discrimination, both in the recruitment process and once hired. The main focus is on the perceptions of discrimination. In this introductory chapter, first a brief overview is presented on the migration history and labor market position of minorities in the Netherlands. Subsequently, a broader perspective is given on the literature and relevant theories related to perceptions of discrimination. The chapter will conclude with an outline of the studies that are described in the chapters that follow.

Migration History

As mentioned the goal of the studies presented in this dissertation is to understand minority group employees' perceptions of discrimination especially during selection, but also in the workplace. To gain a more thorough understanding of the context in which the studies took place, a short overview of the migration history in the Netherlands is given here.

The Netherlands has al long history of immigration which dates back many centuries. However, an increase in migration started after World War II and the post war period can be divided into three immigration waves. The first wave started because of decolonization (Vogel, 2005), where different groups of immigrants from former Dutch colonies (Indonesia, Surinam and the Dutch Antilles) arrived in the Netherlands. Most of these immigrant groups were familiar with the Dutch language and lifestyle. They were well educated and could speak the language fluently, thus had no real problems integrating into Dutch society (Ganzeboom, 2001).

The second wave was formed by a group of immigrants from the Southern of Europe and from Turkey and Morocco. They were supposed to be temporary workers because the economic growth in the Netherlands resulted in an shortage of unskilled and low-skilled employees and the government started to actively recruit migrant workers in these countries (Lucassen, 2005). These workers were called 'gastarbeiders' (guest workers), because they were expected to work in the Netherlands for a few years only and then return home. In 1973, the recruitment of these migrant workers stopped because of the oil crisis and accompanying economic decline. Contrary to expectations, many temporary workers stayed and the numbers of migrants from these backgrounds increased steadily until today. This increase was caused by family-reunification and the poor economic perspectives immigrants faced in their country of origin (Lucassen, 2005).

The third wave is formed by a group of political as well as religious refugees and asylum seekers (Schalk-Soekar, Van de Vijver & Hoogsteder, 2004). They are from a large number of (continually changing) countries, varying from Iraq to former Yugoslavia (Vermeulen & Penninx, 2000). Summarizing, after WWII a growing number of ethnic minorities from various countries and with different backgrounds have become a part of Dutch society (Te Nijenhuis & van der Flier, 2005).

Labor market position

The research reported on in this dissertation started in the beginning of 2005. At that time, after a long period of improvement of ethnic minorities represented in the working force, the position of the minorities in the Netherlands started to deteriorate and unemployment started to increase (Klaver, Mevissen & Odé, 2005). In 2011, the Netherlands had an unemployment of 6,3 % of the working population. Looking at unemployment and ethnic background, the percentage of unemployed Dutch majority group was approximately 4 % and among western ethnic minorities 6%. This compared to a little over 13% unemployed for the Non-Western minority group (where the country of origin is in Africa, Asia (with the exception of Japan and Indonesia), Latin America or Turkey) (CBS, 2012). One the whole, these numbers show that the position

of ethnic minorities in the Dutch workforce is still not at par with that of the ethnic majority group.

The unfavorable labor market position can partly be explained by several factors (e.g., Veenman, 2001). One factor seen as a cause of the high unemployment amongst ethnic minorities and their weak labor market position is their lack of economic and social capital (Schaafsma, 2006). For example, human capital theory posits that the differences are due to their lower level of education and work experience (Becker, 1964; Mincer 1974 in Dagevos, 2001). However, research has also shown that Turkish and Moroccan minorities more often than the Dutch majority with the same human capital have jobs at lower levels of the labor market (Dagevos, 2001). Additionally, at all levels of education, unemployment is still higher within the ethnic minority group than in the majority Dutch group (Zorlu & Hartog, 2001).

Another factor that influences the difference in labor market position is the difference in job search behavior of these groups. There are two main routes for selection: the formal (e.g., temp agencies, formal applications) and the informal (e.g., going through friends or relatives) (Gërxhani, 2005). Ethnic minorities such as Moroccans and especially Turkish in the Netherlands more often search for jobs through members of their own ethnic group, which often leads them to work in jobs for which they are too highly educated (Böcker, 1994; Dagevos & Veenman, 1996; Veenman, 1996; Odé & Dagevos, 1999 in Dagevos, 2001).

Additionally, minority groups may miss out on being in a suited applicant pool because recruiting can happen through word of mouth campaigns leading to an exclusion of certain demographic groups (Goldman et al., 2006). Consequentially, they miss out on getting a suitable, experience-related job, which may result in to Wiley's' (1968) ethnic mobility trap: there is only a short-term profit by having a job. But in the long run, people from other labor segments do not consider the work experience as profitable (Dagevos, 2001) and therefore their position in the labor market stays weak.

As mentioned, the formal route, for example through a temp agency is another possibility for finding a job. However, cultural differences tend to play an important role during interaction, where minorities are likely to be more reserved due to their cultural background and employment agencies have a tendency to look for a more confident attitude (Odé & Veenman, 2003). Based on the similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971), Graves and Powell (1995) mention that demographic similarity on characteristics such as gender or ethnicity will lead to perceived similarity in attitudes and values, which in turn will lead to interpersonal attraction. This interpersonal attraction results in a positive bias and therefore, for example, recruiters are expected to be more likely to hire similar applicants or leaders to be more likely to treat employees

more similar to themselves in a more positive manner. Research confirms that recruiters indeed do see stronger subjective qualifications in applicants who they see as similar to themselves and whom they like (Graves and Powell, 1988). This process is also likely to increase perceptions of discrimination from the applicants' perspective even when the intentions of the recruiter or supervisor are not to discriminate, but are more unconscious and not deliberate in nature. Thus, perceptions of discrimination can arise unconsciously and unintentional and both parties involved in the interaction should be aware of this process.

An additional cause of the disparate representation in the labor market can be found in recruitment and selection. Much research has focused on the detection of adverse impact, which is a hazard during the selection process. Adverse impact represents a difference in selection ratios for members of different groups, and is generally a result of majority minority group mean differences on ability tests (Gottfredson, 1988; Hunter & Hunter, 1984; Hattrup, Rock & Scalia, 1997; Lievens et al., 2002). Candidates are often categorized in terms of majority or minority groups and these two groups have a different average score on the selection predictor variable. This often leads to the selection rate of the majority group (usually the majority group, white applicants) being substantially higher than that in the minority group (usually existent of black or Hispanic applicants in the U.S) (De Corte & Lievens, 2003). There are rules and decisions to conclude that proportions of a minority group are not selected, such as fourth-fifth rules of the thumb, leading to the visibility of actual discrimination (Harris et al., 2004). Additionally, some selection devices used for applicant selection have produced differences when comparing majority groups to a certain minority group. Especially methods such as unstructured interviews or biodata including cognitive tests are associated with subgroup differences related to adverse impact (Pulakos & Schmitt, 1996; Hough & Oswald, 2000; Bobko, Roth & Nicewander, 2005).

The (unstructured) employment interview is one of the most commonly used devices for selection across virtually all jobs (Moscoso, 2000) and is rated more favorably by applicants than other selection devices; it is however, still plagued with bias and discrimination (Saks & McCarthy, 2006). A possible solution is to use other selection measures such as the use of an assessment center or a structured employment interview. These measures tend to show less adverse impact and may thus better allow employers to maximize the skill level and diversify their workforce (Murphy, 2002; De Meijer, 2008).

Minimizing actual discrimination is thus still an important consideration for organizations. However, even when overt actual or intended discrimination is not present sometimes unconscious or indirect discrimination come into play. Research shows that most minority employees are still confronted with (indirect) discrimination

and negative expectations (Pettigrew, 1998, De Vries & Pettigrew, 1998). One out of three applicants' in the Netherlands, reports that he or she experiences work related discrimination (Klaver et al., 2005; De Vries & Pettigrew, 1998) and compared to 2005, perceptions of discrimination during selection and recruitment were still very much existent in 2009 and in that period have increased on the work floor (Monitor rassendiscriminatie, 2009). Therefore, in this dissertation we focus on perceptions of discrimination not only in selection and recruitment but also on the work floor.

Perceived discrimination

When looking at recruitment and selection literature, the processes of adverse impact, unfair discrimination, and differential selection ratios between majority and minority groups in employee selection procedures have received considerable attention. Ryan and Ployharts' (2000) review on applicants' perceptions of a selection procedure indicates that one of the most commonly studied perceptions of a selection procedure are on perceptions of fairness of the procedure or outcome of the process.

More generally, Adams (1965) defined fairness as the degree to which people perceive a proportionality between their input and the outcome of that input (Adam, 1965). Fairness theory argues that when individuals invest effort in their jobs, they expect the organization to reciprocate proportionately (Williamson, 1993). However, forming a judgment about fairness, is often less important as what is perceived as fair (Greenberg & Lind, 2000) and what constitutes unfairness is not very clear (Goldman, Gutek, Stein & Lewis, 2006). However, as people conclude a procedure or outcome to be unfair, they are more likely to file for a discrimination claim (Steiner & Bertolino, 2006). Unfairness can thus lead to discrimination.

Discrimination has been defined as differential treatment based on membership in a social grouping such as race, gender or age (Fiske, 1998) and will occur when there are"unfair behavioral biases"against members of a group"on the basis of group identity (Cox, 1993, p. 64), social category (Jones, 1986), stigma (Goffman, 1963), or ascribed characteristics (Messner,1989, p. 71) relative to other groups with comparable potential, performance, or proven success (Cascio, 1998)" (Dipboye & Colella, 2005, p. 2). Discrimination, thus, can be seen as unfair when it occurs despite comparable performance (Dietz, 2010). Thus, investigating only fairness or only discrimination when focusing on an objective manifestation, such as income differences or proven success, will miss out on the full understanding of discrimination (Banerjee, 2006).

Harris and colleagues defined perceived discrimination as a situation where an individual believes he or she has been discriminated against and the discrimination is based on race, gender, age or other characteristics (Harris et al., 2004). This belief can reflect actual discrimination, but can also exist when actual discrimination is not present

or when it is not clear whether it is present or not. Examining perceptions of discrimination allows us to further understand and explore the subjective side of discrimination. Although it is difficult to determine whether perceptions accurately reflect discriminatory treatment, perceptions do characterize a reality for individuals who report them and therefore have real consequences for workers and employers (Banerjee, 2006). Perceptions do often have a stronger impact on individuals' decision making than objective conditions (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; McKay & Avery, 2006).

Although research on perceived discrimination is still limited, the available (theoretical and empirical) data indeed suggests such negative consequences. Perceived discrimination can lead to a deterioration of the organizations' reputation (Rindova, Williamson, Petkova, & Sever, 2005) and to more discrimination related litigation (Goldman, 2001). It can also have negative psychological effects on the individual, such as an increase in work tension lowered self-esteem, decreased well-being, reduced job satisfaction (e.g. Allport, 1954; Cooley, 1902; Erikson, 1956; Cassidy, Howe, Warden & O'Connor, 2004) or even to physical health problems (Mays, Cochran & Barnes, 2007). Thus, preventing these negative consequences of perceptions of discrimination is both important for individuals and for organizations and society (Goldman et al., 2006).

Based on social identity theory we expect to find a minority-majority group difference in the relationship between the psychological antecedents and the outcome variables that are related to perceived discrimination. Social identity theory proposes that the focus of people's self definition is partly caused by their group membership. People tend to classify themselves and others into categories based on noticeable features such as race or gender and then identify more with members of their own category (in-group) than with members of other categories (out-group) (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, 1987). This suggests individuals derive personal sense from their group membership not only in terms of race or gender, but also in terms of group prototypes, which reflect belief sets, attitudes, norms, values, and behaviors (Hogg, 2001).

Based on social identity theory we expect applicants and employees as well as the people in leading positions that they deal with such as recruiters and supervisors to categorize themselves and others in different groups. Such groups are based on shared characteristics like personal demography (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Sam, 2000) and form the basis for the distinction between similar same group-members and dissimilar out-group members. People pay greater attention to group concerns and outcomes when people consider themselves as part of a group. They allow group members to influence their individual perspective and experiences. Consequentially, we expect to find group differences in perceptions of discrimination, and in the influence of the investigated antecedents on perceptions of discrimination and several other outcome variables which are used in our studies which will be discussed next in the outline of the dissertation.

Outline of dissertation

The aim of this dissertation is to generally answer what antecedents will influence applicants' and employees' perceptions of discrimination and whether there is a minority-majority group difference in the influence of these antecedents on discrimination perceptions. These key questions are investigated in three studies. Each chapter reports on a separate study or combination of studies and was written in such a way that it can be read independently from other chapters. As a consequence, some overlap exists across the chapters, especially in the theoretical background description. Furthermore, it should be noted that each chapter contributes uniquely to the general research question by including different antecedents, moderating variables and outcome variables. Below an overview and outline of each chapter is given.

Chapter 2 presents two separate studies investigating whether and by whom discrimination is expected (Study 1) and experienced (Study 2) during selection procedures, comparing successful and unsuccessful as well as majority and minority group members in the Netherlands. In addition, we investigate whether personal antecedents, (subgroup identity, core self evaluations, and rejection sensitivity) are likely to enhance perceptions of discrimination amongst ethnic minority and majority and among successful and unsuccessful applicants. To test the relationship between these personal antecedents and perceptions of discrimination, we performed two studies among different samples, one of actual applicants while they were applying for a job position with a specific firm, and one of working students in a broad range of jobs, in which they report about their last recruitment experience.

Chapter 3 focuses on whether the communication of a diversity policy by the organization during recruitment affects discrimination perceptions. This study specifically looks at the influence of including a mild diversity policy statement in the early stages of recruitment. Nowadays, many firms are trying to reach out to different groups by including diversity messages in their recruitment material and previous research has shown that presenting a diversity policy can help to attract a diverse applicant pool (e.g., Avery & McKay, 2006; Williamson et al., 2008). A field experiment within a large governmental organization in The Netherlands was conducted amongst rejected minority and majority applicants to investigate whether the inclusion of a mild diversity policy changes perceptions of discrimination and organizational attractiveness for these different groups and, in addition, whether personal psychological antecedents, such as identity strength and attribution style influenced these perceptions among these groups of applicants.

Once the right applicants for the job have been hired, it is just as important for organizations to maintain their employees and keep them motivated to perform well. It is not yet known what the consequences of perceived discrimination during a

selection procedure are after actually being hired, but it is very likely to have negative effects at work attitude. In contrast to the previous chapters that present studies investigating applicants' perceptions of discrimination during a selection procedure, chapter 4 focuses on perceiving discrimination once hired and on the work floor and also goes beyond ethnicity by investigating not only ethnic (dis)similarity but also deeper level (dis)similarity. This study investigates the relationship of leader - follower perceived similarity in work attitudes and values in relation to perceived discrimination. Next to the more noticeable similarity based on characteristics, such as ethnicity, value based similarity forms a deeper level similarity and also investigates the influence of ethical leadership with critical work outcomes. In this study we also study whether ethnicity is a moderator variable.

Relational demography has been defined as 'the comparative demographic characteristics of members of dyads or groups who are in the position to engage in regular interaction' (Tsui & O' Reilly,1989, p.403). The study presented in chapter 4 extends research on relational demography by examining perceived demographic similarity and perceived similarity in work attitudes and values between employees and supervisors as well as ethical leader behavior in relation to perceived discrimination, job performance ratings and turnover intentions. Moreover, extending the literature, we argue that both similarity and ethical leadership will also affect perceived workplace discrimination. In general, this study investigates whether leaders play a role in job performance, turnover intentions and perceptions of discrimination once employees have joined an organization. This is done by collecting dyadic employee and supervisor data from employees and their supervisors in different types of organizations.

Finally, chapter 5 provides a general discussion of the studies presented in this dissertation, and provides some recommendations for practice and future research. Perceptions of discrimination, perceptions of organizational attractiveness, job performance ratings and turnover intentions are discussed with the influence of the psychological antecedents, subgroup identity, core self evaluations, rejection sensitivity, identity strength, attribution style, perceived deeper level similarity and ethical leadership in the recruitment process or once hired at work.