DIFFERENCES OF DIVERSITY ATTITUDES BETWEEN EMPLOYEES WITH AND WITHOUT AN IMMIGRATION BACKGROUND: THE CASE OF GERMANY

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EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF BUSINESS SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Volume 4 Issue 2
ISSN 2336-6494
www.ejobsat.com

ABSTRACT

The demographic shift in the age structure has the effects that many ageing employees work in organisations. Migration can slow down the ageing of population but could not stop it. More and more people with immigration background work in organisations. Therefore, the question is whether diversity sensitive attitudes count for all diversity aspects. The central aim of the study is to deal with the problem fields of multicultural teamwork. Thereby, the focus is on the collaboration of employees with and without immigration background. The interviews with employees with and without an immigration background of various company branches were conducted. The results show that employees with an immigration background have more contact and feel comfortable with persons from different cultures than employees without an immigration background. The qualitative analysis indicates that there is a high need of competence development, especially intercultural and social competences in organisations. The results of the study reveal that personality traits and characteristics of employees play a role to what extent they accept diversity and are willing to work with persons from another culture. Age is not important regarding intercultural competence development.

KEY WORDS

diversity attitudes, multicultural teamwork, migration

JEL CODES

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1 INTRODUCTION

The demographic trend of Europe had changed tremendous in the last decades. New challenges have arisen – started from an ageing population to an intensive immigration. Especially Germany is concerned by this development. Ageing people define increasingly the social image in

GENKOVA, Petia, and KEYSERS, Pia. 2018. Differences of Diversity Attitudes between Employees with and without an Immigration Background: The Case of Germany. *European Journal of Business Science and Technology,* 4 (2): 174–186. ISSN 2336-6494, DOI http://dx.doi.org/10.11118/ejobsat.v4i2.115.

Europe. More than 127 million people are over 60 years old in Europe. This represents a population share of 25% (German Federal Statistical Office, 2016). The demographical change is farthest advanced in Germany, compared to other European countries (German Federal Statistical Office, 2016). Based on demographic changes and the high number of immigration in the years of 2015 and 2016, the society is getting more and more cultural heterogeneous in Europe (German Federal Statistical Office, 2016).

This trends changed the attitudes towards diversity significantly. Thus, the interest in the issue diversity by politics, societies and organisations has risen greatly in the last years. Diversity has become a more important topic in Germany as well as in other European countries. Women as well as people with an immigration background and ageing employees gain more importance at the labour market. For one thing the demographic change is a challenge for organisations. For the other thing it provides an opportunity for groups like ageing people and people with an immigration background (German Federal Statistical Office, 2016). Diverse teams in organisations are one of the consequences of the demographic change (Kunze and Goecke, 2016).

Migration is not only a challenge for organisations and societies, but generate new opportunities for the social progress, economic productivity and innovative capability through heterogeneity and diversity (Pitts, 2009). Research shows that a diverse workplace improves the satisfaction and compliance of employees as well as the performance and communication in teams (Pitts, 2009). However, the research had shown that diversity is primarily associated with stress and difficulties but less with the positive opportunities for innovation and development.

The demand for qualified professionals will further increase in the next years. Women, ageing employees and employees with an immigration background are getting more important for companies to counteract the demographical changes (Adenauer, 2015).

2 DIVERSITY ATTITUDES

Diversity in organisations support the building of personnel diversity (Becker, 2006) and describes the commonalities and differences of people (Krell, 2003). Diversity indicates both the obvious and barely perceived and salient characters like for example age, religion, sexual orientation, cultural values as well as barely obviously changing characters like language and competence (Miliken and Martin, 1996).

Diversity Management includes the values of equal opportunity and fairness. It contributes significantly to the expectations of employees regarding the respect of different individuals that can be satisfied by the company (Magoshi and Chang, 2009). When employees have the feeling of equal opportunity and fair treatment, the fluctuation can be reduced (Chrobot-Mason and Aramovich, 2013).

The presentation of diversity within the organisation has an impact on how employees and leaders accept diversity guidelines. This perception affects the performance of employees and, therefore, the business performance (Groeneveld and Verbeek, 2012; Nishii et al., 2008). It is important that diversity actions are in accordance with the corporate culture and the business model. This means that diversity actions should fit to the organisation and do not feel like foreign matter. Research had shown that diversity management is only successful if it was implemented as a top-down-process. Therefore, it is important that the leadership as well as every company level support diversity. The success of diversity depends highly on whether and to what extent leaders support the process and are a role model for their employees (Groeneveld and Verbeek, 2012; Nishii et al., 2008). Cultural diversity remains to be one of the hardest challenges even if every organisation is already grappling with gender mainstream and elderly staff. Hereby considerably more problems and conflicts are expected than with

the integration of women and elderly staff into established working processes. The implementation of cultural diversity requires especially culturally sensitive actions, a complex cultural environment as well as intercultural competences and diversity management (Lanfranchi, 2013).

Cultural diversity can set impulses in a number of society areas, economic sectors and areas of life. Nevertheless, the research shows that individuals can see diversity as a threat (van Knippenberg et al., 2013).

Diversity can be enriching for organisations and individuals, when they engage in perspective change (Page, 2007). Studies have shown that people with pro-diversity beliefs describe groups as good, precisely by the fact that that groups are diverse. This accords to the social identity. People with a pro-diversity belief identify themselves stronger with the group (van Dick et al., 2008). Wolf and van Dick (2008) pointed out in their study, that people, who see migrants as enrichment, have more contacts to them and express less xenophobia, compared to those, who do not see migrants as enrichment for the society. Stegman (2011) illustrated in his Meta-Analysis that pro-diversity beliefs as well as a positive diversity culture result in beneficial results for groups and individuals and increase the job performance.

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The development of diversity in organisations reduces the fluctuation rate of employees. As a result, costs for organisations will be reduced (Armstrong et al., 2010; Roland Berger Study, 2012; Evans, 2014). Furthermore, the productivity as well as the innovation capability of employees increase when organisations develop the individual competences of their employees (Evans, 2014; Armstrong et al., 2010). A diverse team has a positive impact on new aspects and ideas of employees. The diversity and differences of competences produces new approaches for problem solving as well as suggestions for improvement (Pitts, 2009).

Which parameter do promote and support diversity? Are there difference in handling with diversity?

Appropriate knowledge, intercultural abilities and competences have to be generated and transferred to implement a successful diversity management. The culture-comparative and intercultural research shows (Berry et al., 2012; Genkova, 2012; Segall et al., 1999) that culturally conditioned fault lines can arise based on cultural differences, especially, in connection with acculturation processes or forms of economic cooperation (Asbrock et al., 2012; Homan et al., 2007).

Studies have shown that acculturative individuals can adapt better to the society and prefer to keep their own origin culture and integrate in the bigger national society. Thus, they prefer to connect both cultures. Most countries have introduced multicultural rules and guidelines for integration, which include only assimilation, segregation or marginalization, instead of integration (Berry et al., 2011).

The perception of intergroup difference is an important influence factor in culturally diverse societies. This is examined inter alia by van Osch and Breugelmans (2012). They analysed the perceived group difference as organisational principle of intercultural attitudes and acculturation attitudes.

Minority groups, who were perceived as being more different from themselves by the majority members, received less support for multiculturalism. Furthermore, they were seen as a threat and less competent by the majority group.

Majority members assumed that minority groups did not want to adapt the culture of the majority group to maintain their own ethnical culture.

Minorities, who perceived themselves as different to the majority group, could better adapt to multiculturalism. They adopted the mainstream culture less and maintained their own culture more. Van Osch and Breugelmans

(2012) showed that intergroup differences are an important aspect of intergroup relationships in culturally diverse societies.

Diversity can also lead to rejection by individuals. This demarcation attitude can lead to the fact that diversity is perceived as threat and stress, not only by employees with an immigration background but also by employees without an immigration background.

Stereotypes and prejudices can disturb diverse teamwork. Negative stereotypes can reduce the performance of group members. These aspects are examined by a number of studies (Stereotype Threat, cf. Blascovich et al., 2001; Stelle and Aronson, 1995). Negative stereotypes can increase the probability of internal attribution of failure (Koch et al., 2008) and can lead to the fact that individuals dissociate from the domain group, which confront them with negative stereotypes (von Hippel et al., 2005). Thereby, the experience of Stereotype Threat has direct effects on the job performance of individuals as well as on the motivation (Martiny et al., 2013).

The research illustrates a diverse management guidance exerts positive influence on the performance of the organisation (Talke et al., 2010; Nielsen and Nielsen, 2013; Baixauli-Soler et al., 2015). The perception of diversity climate affects significantly the extent to which employees have the feeling to be themselves at work. This encourages employees to develop innovative solutions and to identify themselves with the organisation (Chrobot-Mason and Aramovich, 2013).

Diversity has not only benefits on the individual level, but also on the organisational level as well as the team level. The implementation of diversity management creates a positive image among employees and customers. To use the potential of diversity, the dominant diversity has to be organised and be consciously integrated in the particular organisation. Then, everyone experiences positive aspects by intercultural cooperation (Thomas, 2006; Franken, 2015).

However, in practice, it often turns out a different picture. One culture dominates the other. This leads to a differentiation between non-dominant groups and dominant groups (Berry et al., 2011).

Diversity can also have a number of disadvantages for individuals, for persons with an immigration background as well as for persons without an immigration background. Ward (1996) examined that the acculturation process is more difficult, when the differences between two cultures are larger. When the cultural distance is too big, behavioural changes are a bigger challenge for individuals because a larger amount of changes are demanded by the group, dominant or non-dominant group. However, the change of the non-dominant group is greater. When the challenge of changing is a serious threat for the individual, this phenomenon is called acculturative stress (Ward, 1996).

Multicultural societies promote two cultural identities and characteristics of ethno-cultural groups and accept the contact and participation of groups in the bigger pluralistic society (Berry et al., 2011). It is the knowledge of stereotypes about the own minority as well as eventual discrimination by others that can lead to stress at employees with an immigration background (Meyer, 2003). Discrimination causes a significant emotional stress of individuals in the stress-coping-research. By Jetten and Branscombe (2009), it is helpful for individuals to cope with discrimination by identifying themselves with the minority and by emphasizing the difference between other minorities or to the majority group (Jetten and Branscombe, 2009).

Factors like lack of autonomy, role ambiguity or stressful working conditions as well as the culture influence the stress level of employees at the workplace (Jetten and Branscombe, 2009). These factors can have an impact on persons with an immigration background as well as on ageing employees. Ageing employees are often underestimated in terms of flexibility compared to younger employees, innovative capacity and handling with stress.

The research shows that diverse management guidance can influence the organisation's performance in a positive way and, therefore, diversity management is important for organisations.

3 METHODOLOGY AND DATA

This study is part of a bigger project, which grabbles with individual and organisational conditions for successful diversity. Especially the implicit attitudes of the employees in Germany are examined to determine the barriers of the implementation of diversity.

The explicit attitude pictures that diversity is desirable in Germany. But the attitudes of initiating an acting show clearly that people rather associate stress and reserves with diversity. For that reason the project is constructed as a two-stage study – a qualitative survey were conducted for generating hypothesis first and a quantitative study was following for reviewing these hypothesis. In this article the implicit attitudes of employees with and without migrant background are examined and compared. 18 employees with an immigration background and 15 employees without an immigration background from different organisations were interviewed by telephone regarding their attitude to cultural diversity, diversity and multicultural teamwork. The questions were asked in a direct an in an indirect way to verify the attitudes and to generate the hypothesis of research nearby reality and praxis. People of big organisations were asked because diversity management is existing rather in big German organisations. Also the number of people with migrant background is adequate to answer the research questions by the own results and not in a hypothetic way.

The explorative interviews enable to present the backgrounds and relationships between cultural diversity from the view of involved employees from different industries.

Thereby, it was analysed whether differences between employees with and without an immigration background and between younger and ageing employees exist.

The qualitative investigation is part of a big project to generate hypotheses for a quantitative investigation and to obtain specific measurements for a quantitative questionnaire. Therefore explorative questions wer asked, which were answered with the interviews.

A qualitative structured interview was selected as survey method. It allows to understand and analyse the diversity aspects of culture and age and its challenges. Furthermore, not-considered aspects from the research can be figured out. In this case e.g. how employees with and without an immigration background perceive multicultural teamwork and how important competences are in the present working world.

The anonymised interviews were analysed by applying the quantitative content analysis by Mayring (2015). Therefore, the material will be transcribed, categorised and generalised and analysed by Excel. The interviews were also analysed by the frequency analysis with the aim to count the elements of the material and compare their frequency with other elements (Mayring, 2015). The structured interviews do not include response categories except of some closed items and contains predominantly open questions. The structured interview is based on an interview guideline, which is formulated deductive, thus, theory-based.

The interview questions primary pertain to the handling with cultural ambivalent situations. The handling and communication with colleagues with the same and with other cultural background is focused. Other questions inquire which diversity measures are known by the employees – here it is important to mention that the data collection took place only in organisations that have diversity management concepts. But only the measurement of the implementation of a concept can verify if these concepts are successful or not. The employees were also asked about challenges with diversity and the relevance of diversity to get some hints for an implicit approval or disapproval of diversity. This shall be integrated into the quantitative study.

It is also important to evaluate the role of management and leadership for the handling with diversity and the assessment of the role of persons with immigration background for the organisation.

The interview guideline is structured as follows: The first partpart has asked the employees about their demographic data, e.g. age, gender, immigration background, business sectors and internationality of the company. Another part has related to questions about the issues of diversity, especially equal opportunities of persons with an immigration background, e.g.: "What do you associate with the term diversity?", "Which aspects does the term diversity include in your opinion?".

Furthermore, the employees were asked about the issue prejudices, discrimination and multicultural teamwork. The employees were asked whether discrimination exists in companies. Finally, employees with an immigration background were additionally asked whether they perceived discrimination in their private life or work life and to which area their statements referred. They could answer this question voluntarily.

The first explorative hypothesis is: Employees without an immigration background see more disadvantages in the multicultural teamwork than employees with an immigration background.

The base of the self-assessment is a Likert-scale. The closed questions were answered on a 5-Point Likert Scale, 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, by the respondents and derive from English-speaking questionnaires, which were translated into Germany by the method of retranslation, e.g. 'I would judge myself as being open to people of different cultures.'

In addition, the interview focused on the issue competence. Thereby, diversity competences were examined in detail. Another part of the interviews was the stress level and stressors of employees with and without an immigration background regarding diversity. Furthermore, the employees were asked about the effectiveness of diversity actions, inter alia diversity concepts that reduce prejudices against persons with an immigration background.

The aim of the interview's questions were to obtain knowledge about how employees and managers live and promote diversity, especially the equal opportunities of employees with an immigration background. Furthermore, it can be examined how effective and successful diversity actions are in practice. Thereby, the focus is especially on diversity competences and diversity attitudes of employees.

To verify hints for the second survey the closed questions were also evaluated. Therefore three hypotheses were tested:

- *Hypothesis 1:* Employees with an immigration background feel more comfortable to work with people from different cultures than employees without an immigration background.
- *Hypothesis 2:* Employees with an immigration background feel more familiar in dealing with persons from different cultures than employees without an immigration background.
- *Hypothesis 3:* Younger employees feel more familiar in dealing with persons from different cultures than ageing employees.

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method of retranslation, e.g. "I am open to people from different cultures".

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The sample of the qualitative investigation consists of 18 employees with an immigration background and 15 employees without an immigration background. Thirteen of all are female and 20 are male. The average age of the sample is $M = 35.48$ ($N = 33$; SD = 9.99). The respondents work about $M = 9.29$ years ($N = 33$; SD = 9.37) in their organisations.

4 RESULTS

In the following, the results of the explorative survey will be presented: Employees without an immigration background see more disadvantages in the multicultural teamwork than employees with an immigration background.

The results show that both groups recognise the challenges of multicultural teams. However, employees without an immigration background see more disadvantages than advantages in multicultural teams compared to employees with an immigration background. According to the statements of both groups, particular challenges regarding the cooperation of persons with an immigration background are potential language barriers like "especially difficulties in understanding different languages as problematic". Different languages can lead to misunderstandings. Employees with an immigration background additionally mentioned following problem fields: cultural working methods and attitudes ("Well, I think that sensitivities in every culture are different and also what is important for the people. There are cultures, which need very strong confirmation by others. This is what I have been experiencing They have different hierarchical concepts.") Employees without an immigration background mentioned a different understanding of team culture and capacity of teamwork as well as social interaction as problems in multicultural teams. One employee without an immigration background said e.g. "I believe that every culture deals differently with a subject. Some people from other cultures are temperamental and have different approaches and values."

The results do not surprise although people with immigration background are also natives. Obviously, it is a wide spread negative stereotype to join cultural differences and divergent or insufficient language skills. This is also reported by people with immigration background. People assume those people with immigration background to have inferior languages skills even if this is not right.

The analysis of biculturalism of employees with an immigration background supports the results of the qualitative investigation. They answered the closed questions on a 5-point Likert Scale, 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Employees have a strong connection to their ethnical group ($N = 16$; $M = 3.75$; SD = 1.34). Furthermore, they have a stronger connection to their ethnical group. But most of their friends are from Germany and their ethnical group ($N = 16$; $M = 4.44$; SD = 1.03). It is to be mentioned that the closest friends of employees with an immigration background do not have necessarily the same cultural background like themselves ($N = 15$; $M = 2.33$; SD = 1.45). In this sample, the employees with

an immigration background are integrated in both cultures and feel mostly integrated (N = 18; $M = 4.44$; SD = 1.19).

This results are also verified in international research. The relation of acculturation and socio-cognitive functions is tested in the study of Tadmor et al. (2009). Bicultural persons were more integrative complex than adapted persons. One reason for this is that bicultural persons have better skills and can differentiate between competing cultural perspectives. They are able to integrate themselves to adapted individuals and separated individuals.

Employees with an immigration background list up following aspects as difficulties in the multicultural teamwork: social interaction, leadership, cultural conflicts, language deficits, intercultural perspective and work attitudes and different personalities. Employees without an immigration background point out that intercultural interaction, personality and generational differences are difficulties in the multicultural teamwork.

Apart from immigration background you can explain this behaviour with the classically theories of social psychology.

The theory of social identity indicates that members of within groups are evaluated more favourable than members of the foreign group. Positive successes are related to the within group. Negative behaviour is attributed internal to the members of foreign groups. Comparative cultural studies confirm that negative behaviour is attributed external in the within group. Negative expectations are established against members of the foreign group (Hewstone, 1988). This may explain why employees without an immigration background assess multicultural teamwork more negative and attribute the problems to employees with an immigration background.

An interesting aspect was mentioned in the interviews. It was the issue of envy towards employees with an immigration background. Employees without an immigration background partly regard employees with an immigration background with envy because they take the view that employees with an immigration background are preferred and get more support than others.

Employees without an immigration background mentioned the aspect of envy as well. One employee with an immigration background reasoned "envy […] is a big factor and plays a huge role. Envy and fame as well as respect are important facts. Some people with an immigration background feel vulnerable when other people with an immigration background are around them because they felt as a unique before. When other people with an immigration background work with other people with an immigration background together, they feel envy and confronted by the other people with an immigration background because they might have the same qualifications as them. Envy is the biggest problem. Envy, respect and fame." Employees without an immigration background mentioned, furthermore, the aspect of fear getting in contact with employees with an immigration background. Prejudices and social categorisation can lead to distance between employees and can have an impact on the multicultural teamwork for half of the respondents. Uncertainty, ignorance and fear towards other cultures can also create distance between employees because the own culture can be swamped by the other culture and can lead to loss of identity.

The concept of envy is explored in the US research in relation to conflicts between white and colored people as well as between Latin-American immigrants and native population. It is verified with the theories of social dominance (Sidanius and Pratto, 2001) and realistic group conflicts. Through the explorative questions it becomes clear that the concept of envy looms large and so it should be considered for an examination of the quantitative issues.

Overall the respondents were largely satisfied with the multicultural teamwork ($N = 11$; $M = 4.73$; SD = 0.65).

In the following, the results of the quantitative hypotheses are presented.

Hypothesis 1: Employees with an immigration background feel more comfortable to work with people from different cultures than employees without an immigration background.

The results do not show significant differences. This is an indication that diversity is not perceived as a threat by employees or that the expression of intercultural competence is very high. This indication will be examined in the further quantitative research. The *t*-test confirmed the non-significant differences ($T = 1.24$; df 1; 21; $p = 0.068$).

Hypothesis 2: Employees with an immigration background feel more familiar in dealing with persons from different cultures than employees without an immigration background.

A *t*-test was conducted to verify this hypothesis. The results show high significant differences (Employees without an immigration background $M = 3.47$; SD $= 0.83$; Employees with an immigration background $M = 4.67$; $SD = 0.49$; $T = 5.157$; df 1; 31; $p = 0.000$). The differences indicate that the growth of intercultural competences is due to personnel background and experience. The quantitative results are supported by the evaluations of the qualitative investigation. E.g. quote of an employee with an immigration background: "[…] people with an immigration background have grown up at least with two cultures and different perspectives and competences. Therefore, we have a better understanding other people better."; "People, who have not experienced intercultural experiences, are also able to make perspective change by their seniority. […] But I believe that experience is the most important thing in this context, e.g. experiences abroad or to know different contexts and cultures."

Hypothesis 3: Younger employees feel more familiar in dealing with persons from different cultures than ageing employees. This hypothesis was refuted because there is no significant difference between both groups ($T = -1.462$; df 1; 31; $p = 0.154$). The assumption that younger persons are more open for new experiences and, therefore, are more flexible and unprejudiced could not be confirmed. Intercultural competences are not influenced by age, but by personality traits.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results show that the significance of self-awareness and exchange of experience and the expression of intercultural competence increases. There are differences regarding the familiarity in dealing with other cultures between persons with and without an immigration background. Persons with an immigration background have more experiences with persons from other cultures. They often grow up with at least two cultures and, therefore, learned early to adapt to other cultures and to engage in it. The qualitative investigation clarifies that it is important for organisations to promote their employees and managers regarding intercultural competences. The age does not play a role regarding intercultural competences.

In this study it can be positively pointed out that a quite high diversification could be reached with a sample of 33 employees with and without an immigration background. The respondents work in small, medium-sized and large organisations where, on the one hand, diversity has already been implemented and, on the other hand, no diversity actions have been implemented. Furthermore, the employees were from different business areas throughout Germany. Based on the small sample, a large overview about the issue of diversity management could be given in Germany. Considering the importance of diversity and diversity attitudes of employees, especially the equal opportunities of persons with an immigration background and ageing people, allow to analyse disregarded aspects from involved persons. Bigger questionnaires can build upon the results of this qualitative study and examine the results in detail. The interview guideline gives a large overview of the different factors and the importance and attitudes of diversity in companies. However, the interview guideline should be extended on the basis of the results of the study and more detailed questions should be asked. Furthermore, the results should be examined by a quantitative study.

The interview guideline has covered many issues of diversity management. The combination of closed and open questions has increased the comparability of the interviews compared to interviews with only open questions. But the results of structured interviews are less comparable, inter alia based due to open questions, whereby the analysis is more difficult. The results would be more comparable, if a standardised, quantitative questionnaire was used and a higher sample could be asked. Nevertheless, the results would not be so diverse and multifaceted as with the selected interviews. The study could consider and differentiate the problem fields and diversity attitudes of employees with and without an immigration background in detail. The qualitative investigation was predominantly used for generating hypotheses. Therefore, the differences of the groups were only measured to generate hypotheses for a quantitative investigation. It provides approaches which have to be examined in detail in subsequent studies.

The following has to be criticised regarding the survey method: The interview guideline deals partly superficial with some topics of diversity. It could have been asked more, e.g. what kind of discrimination exist in organisations and which actions could help to reduce discrimination? The respondents are even though from different business areas and sizes. However, other companies can differentiate from the sample due to other characteristics, e. g. size, structure, implementation of a diversity department.

It is necessary to investigate the category systems of the interviews regarding their quality criteria. The interviews of the study were used for generating hypotheses for a quantitative questionnaire. Therefore, additional aspects regarding diversity, especially equal opportunities of persons with an immigration background, which are represented in the conventional quantitative research, could be measured.

The sample is evenly distributed regarding the persons with and without an immigration background. The following has to be criticised regarding the sample. There were more women than men who conducted the interview. Furthermore, the results only give approaches regarding diversity attitudes of employees with and without an immigration background. There is a strong East-West gap concerning the employment of migrants in organisations in Germany. This fact is reflected in the interviews. Not every respondent has been in contact with migrants in their work routine, when the interview was conducted. To get a representative sample, a more comprehensive sample should be made with employees in Germany. Furthermore, it should be examined how effective diversity actions are and to what extent diversity concepts should take a higher priority in personnel actions. The results showed that the priority depends on the business areas, size and the location of the company as well as the diversity of the staff.

It has to be considered, whether the answers were given due to social desirability or deliberate misrepresentation because the survey method was an interview. Some of the questions have been very personal and referred to perceived discrimination of employees with an immigration background in working and in private life. According to the statements of employees, around one third of the employees with an immigration background have perceived discrimination in their private life. The discrimination referred to outward appearances and their origin culture. The interviewed employees with an immigration background have not perceived discrimination in their work life according to the results of the qualitative investigation. Group specific development concepts help to reduce discrimination in companies according to the results.

The data of the interviews were anonymised. Therefore, the effects of social desirability could be minimised but it could still occur due to the social interaction during the interviews. This could lead to a distortion of the results because e.g. the individual responsibility or the skills of the own person were presented more positive. Therefore, the results have to be discussed critically. A deliberate misrepresentation can be excluded because the respondents participated voluntarily at the interview and did not have to expect any negative effects due to giving specific statements.

The qualitative results show a tendency to regional differences regarding the importance of diversity and that diversity attitudes of employees exist. The results can occur to what extent employees are grown up in a multicultural context and how open the environment is. Prejudices against persons from another culture can be partly reduced by implementing diversity concepts. The results of the interviews indicate that such concepts are generation-dependent and location-dependent. The younger generation grows up in a multicultural society in Germany and in Europe. Therefore, they bring certain intercultural competences into their work life. Diversity plays a more important role for organisations. But there can be the risk of negative connotation. The interviews showed that in the western part of Germany, e.g. in the Ruhr area, such a diversity concept for equal opportunities of migrants would be superfluous because there is a high proportion of migrants and it is normal to work with different cultures together.

In summary, there is a high demand of competence development, especially regarding intercultural competence and social competence. Social competence facilitates the collaboration with persons with an immigration background and employees learn to experience a change of perspective. The results of the study show that personality traits and characteristics of employees play a role to what extent employees accept diversity and are willing to work with persons from another culture. Age does not play a role regarding intercultural competence development. This means for organisations to offer trainings and seminars for the issues of culture, stereotypes and intercultural competences and to support as well as experience abroad and foreign assignment.

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