

Perspectives of Jaya Jusco's Employees towards the Discrimination of Transgender People in the Workplace and Their Responses

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the types of discrimination toward transgender people and the responses from the employees at Jaya Jusco, Penang. This research briefly demonstrates on how types of discrimination towards transgenderist employees will affect the responses from the employees. The population size of the employees at Jaya Jusco, Penang is 100. 100 employees were selected to fill the sets of questionnaire. The data were collected and analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 16.0. The research has identified which one of the types of discrimination has a major influence towards the responses of the employees in the workplace.

Keywords: Crossdresser, Transgenderist, Transgendered, Sexual Orientation,

INTRODUCTION

Majority of the societies expect men or women to perform their masculine or feminine roles and to behave in line with their sex assigned at birth. Most of the scholars who make researches on genders also only touch the issues that involve the male and female in the workplace. In a workplace, the characteristic of male tend to be seen as authoritative and concerned

about competition while the characteristic of female tend to motivate others and concerned about cooperation when performing their work (Hoyenga & Hoyenga, 1979). Hence, it sparks interest on the characteristic of transgender in a workplace. Their identities can be ambiguous and in contrary to their biological sex and generally called as transgenderists. Right until now, there are a few scholars who carry researches on transgender in the workplace especially in Malaysia. Since there is limited number of research being done, most organization in Malaysia does not know how to handle and treat these transgenderists people in the workplace. For example, transgenderists who are biologically male and has feminine personalities, give a lot of different perceptions from the employers and colleagues toward their work performance and the way in which transgenderists are going to behave in the workplace. They also do not know how to delegate a suitable task to these transgenderists since their gender characteristics are ambiguous or unknown.

According to Barclay and Scott (2006) in their case study about Susan, a transgender woman, there are several reactions at her workplace when she makes her female transformation. Although Susan's manager was not aware of legislation regarding transsexual employees within the workplace, she said that she will deal the situation in a fair and professional manner. The lack of a policy or guidance on gender reassignment was particularly frustrating, and the manager together with the HR Officer, resorted to using an internet search to find some guidance. However, the manager felt "lacking in knowledge" and felt "pressure to tread carefully at all times" which left her feeling "isolated and exposed". When the manager informed staff of the Susan condition, staff reactions ranged from anger, upset, to humour and sniggering. These reactions and the staff's lack of knowledge were also felt to be "testing" for the manager.

The reaction of some people was astonishment, (although supportive), whilst that of others was aggressive. One person refused to work with her and her senior manager harasses her because of her change. Some staff turned their backs on her and conversations stopped when she entered a room.

According to Wessler (2005) the first type of discrimination towards transgenderist at a workplace is discrimination in terms of employment. Based on the case study, Richard a transgender man in his thirties, worked on the loading dock of a Cumberland County business. His supervisor, who had expressed significant anti-gay bias, give him extra works and ordered him to do it alone although the company practice was to have two employees load a truck. The supervisor made it clear that Richard would be fired if he did not complete the loading.

The second type of discrimination is discrimination among the colleague. Based on the case study made by Wessler (2005) Bonnie, a transgender college student in her late teens, worked in a retail clothing store in York County. She disclosed her gender identity to the store manager, but was not out to other employees. One co-worker frequently made anti-gay comments at work and told jokes about faggots. “He would relentlessly talk about any gay men who walked into our store, making fun of them behind their backs, imitating and overemphasizing their hand gestures” and speech. Bonnie was petrified about the possibility of her gender identity being disclosed to her co-workers. The ongoing anti-gay slurs and comments made her anxious and scared for her physical safety. Bonnie approached the store manager and told him about the co-worker’s behavior, explaining that his behavior made her very uncomfortable. She does not think the manager did anything because her co-worker continued to use degrading comments and slurs. Bonnie resorted to changing her own work hours in order to minimize contact with the co-worker.

METHODOLOGY

This research is conducted at Jaya Jusco, which is located at Penang. The population size at Jaya Jusco, Penang in year 2009 is 100. All the employees at Jaya Jusco will be as our sample size. By referring to the table provided by Uma Sekaran (2003, pg 294) the sample size for 100 is 80.

The population of our study is referring to all the employees at Jaya Jusco. The population size is 100 employees. In this company there are 7 departments which are Human Resource Department, Jusco Supermarket, Cosmetics, Ladies Apparel, Men's and Kid's Apparel, Household and Home & DIY. We have distributed 20 questionnaires to Human Resource Department, 35 questionnaires to Jusco Supermarket, 5 questionnaires to Cosmetics, 5 questionnaires to Ladies Apparel, 5 questionnaires to Men's and Kid's Apparel, 5 questionnaires to Household and 5 questionnaires to Home & DIY. Our sample size is 80 employees. But we have distributed 100 questionnaires in order to avoid any error that will be occurred.

Research Objectives

2.1.1 The first objective of the study is to examine the relationship between discrimination of transgenderist during employment and employees' responses.

2.1.2 The second objective of the study is to examine the relationship between discrimination of transgenderist among the colleague and employees' responses.

2.1.3 The third objective of the study is to determine the dominant types of discrimination towards transgender that influence negatives employees' responses.

Data Collection

For the data collection method, we have used personally administered questionnaires. According to Sekaran (2003), the advantage of administered questionnaire is the completed data can be collect from the respondents in one time or period. We have divided our questionnaire set into 4 sections which are Section A, B, C and D. In Section A, we collected the background information of the respondent which is demographic factors such as gender, age, race, department and experience working with transgender employees. In Section B, we collect the information regarding the first independent variables which is discrimination of transgenderist in term of employment. While in section C we collect information regarding the second independent

variables which is discrimination of transgenderist among colleague in the workplace. We will collect the information from all respondents whether they are transgender person or not. In Section D, we collect information regarding dependent variable about the responses of all respondent whether they discriminate transgender or not.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data, we have used the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 16.0. Through this SPSS system, we can test the viability of data, the normality and also to test the hypothesis that we have generated. We used the Pearson Correlation and Multiple Regression Correlation in order to interpret and testing the significant relationship between the independent variables which is types of discrimination with the dependent variable which is employees' responses.

RESULTS

The findings of our research indicate that the results of our first objective there is positive relationship between discrimination of transgenderist during employment and employees' responses. The correlation indicates that discrimination of transgenderist during employment is associated with negative employees' responses ($r = 0.416$, $p < 0.05$). So the discrimination towards transgenderist during employment influences employees' negative responses.

The result for the second objective indicates that there is positive relationship between discrimination of transgenderist among the colleague and employees' responses. The correlation indicates that discrimination of transgenderist among colleagues is associated with negative employees' responses ($r = 0.358$, $p < 0.05$). So the discrimination towards transgenderist among the colleague influences employees' negative responses.

The result for the last objective indicates that the dominant types of discrimination that influence negative employees' responses is discrimination during employment. Based on the result obtained, the calculated F statistic value is 10.810 with a corresponding p-value < 0.05 . Thus, the proposed model is said to be adequate in predicting the dependent variable using the two said predictors. Based on the model summary table, the R-square and Adjusted R-square value is 0.360 and 0.342 respectively. The table of coefficient showed that all two variables have significant relationship with employees' responses. The first predictor which is discrimination in term of employment has p-value = 0.004 ($p < 0.05$). The beta value is 0.322 shows a positive relationship with employees' responses. The second predictor is discrimination towards transgenderist among colleagues has p-value = 0.036 ($p < 0.05$) and it shows a positive relationship with employees' responses.

The result which was obtained from this research is important for the organization to reveal the discrimination toward transgenderist during performing job and interaction with colleagues in Jaya Jusco. In order to determine and understand the discrimination face by transgenderists and the people who work with them in their organization. Then, only after that the managers or top management can find the solution for the issues and problems face by them in the workplace.

Besides that, the result obtained is useful for the company in order to provide suitable strategy or plan to implement rules and policies for the transgenderist and the other employees in the organization in order to avoid conflict and discrimination.

Finally, the research is important in order to determine the impact of the discrimination on transgenderists toward the employers, colleagues and transgenderist themselves in the organization. The discrimination issues may give negative impact to the employees' performance such as stress, reduction of work productivity and turnover.

CONCLUSION

The discrimination toward transgender people in the workplace always exist whether in Malaysia or other countries. This has causing many conflicts in the organization and further affecting employees' job performance. Therefore, a lot of researches on transgender issues in the workplace or in the society need to be conducted in order to help organizations determine the problems face by transgender and people around them and find the solutions. In Malaysia, transgender people are not recognized in the state legislation. So, their rights in the workplace are not protected by the law and violation toward them is not penalized. Action need to be taken in order for employees whether transgender or not to perform well in their job.

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