



Examining the relationship between employment equity implementation and employee performance at workplace: Evidence from a leading organisation in South Africa



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ABSTRACT

Employment equity has continued to occupy a centre stage in the field of human resource management in the current and forthcoming decades in various countries worldwide. It plays a critical role in promoting the elimination of unfair discrimination and consideration of people from previously disadvantaged groups at the workplace. The paper aims to establish the relationship between employment equity implementation and employee performance. The paper also examines the relationship between eliminating unfair discrimination and employee performance at the workplace. In addition, the paper also aims to evaluate the relationship between the maintenance of affirmative action and employee performance. This study adopted a descriptive research design and a quantitative research approach. The data employed regression analysis to test the hypotheses. Data was gathered from 172 employees in a leading organisation in South Africa. This paper's key findings revealed a positive relationship between employment equity implementation and employee performance. The statistical tests revealed a significant relationship between eliminating discrimination and improving employee performance in the workplace. However, the results of the statistical tests revealed an insignificant relationship between the maintenance of affirmative action and the improvement of employee performance at the workplace. In conclusion, organisations should ensure they eliminate unfair discrimination at all costs. This can improve employee performance.

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Introduction

Indeed, the significance of employment equity for contemporary and future Human Resource Management (HRM) is salient as many reports of frustration coupled with what they perceive to be unfairness, discrimination and poor inclusivity are experienced at the workplaces. Inequity is a pernicious and pervasive employment issue. It has critical significance to the future of human resource management around the world. Although the aspect of employment equity has been welcomed in various countries across the world, its implication to employee performance is still questioned. First preference to employment has been given to people from designated groups across the world (Aidla, 2013; Harish, Frank, & Christa, 2012), as a result of this their performances have been put on a limelight as some organisations label them as incompetent. Reports of poor performance from designated groups are placing pressure acute pressure to employers to abandon the implementation of employment equity. The pressure continues to grow at a heady rate. The issue of poor performance has sapped the efforts of employers to continuously enforce policies of employment equity in the organisations. There is a rising tide of performance disillusionment regarding people from designated groups (Inuwa, 2017). In contrast, ignoring employment equity implementation prompts people from designated groups disavow their engagement in the organisation. Indeed, it seems organisations are increasingly subscribing to the belief that the implementation of employment equity leads to poor employee performance within the organisation. Governments of various countries are blamed for enforcing employment equity regulations without regard for performance of the organisations.

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As the employment equity implementation is a fundamental characteristic of development, it should be at the centre of the debate when tackling performances and new development prospects. Many countries around the world, America, Brazil, Canada, Malaysia, South Africa among others, continue to strive to fully implement employment equity (Sarkar, 2016; Lee, 2016). However, there are tons of scepticism in the implementation of the employment equity as it is seen as the cause of retardation of employee performance. These forces various organisations in different countries to boycott this policy and some falter to full execute it. There is a huge disarray in the literature between theories and empirics in the aforementioned matter. The views of people highlight a dichotomy of employment equity implementation and employee performance. Employers across the globe appreciate the growing need for maximum employee performance. The failure or success of an organisation largely hinges on the quality of its employees. In nations with acute critical skill shortages like developing countries, the strategic value in employment is of paramount importance. Considering the present age that demands evidence-based efficiency of employees in the organisation (Maiyo & Yamoah, 2013), continued employment equity implementation is not sustainable without firm research to check its effectiveness and improvement its functions.

Despite employment equity not being a new concept, it has received too little attention from the employee performance point of view. In addition, the performance aspect remains overlooked in the implementation of employment equity hence remains an uncharted territory. None of the research has been conducted to specifically examine the relationship between employment equity implementation and employee performance. Many comprehensive evaluation research in the past focused on employment equity in general (Louw, 2015; Lee, 2016; Mason & Roman, 2015), with few attempted to incorporate employee performance. This proved to be incomplete and insufficient since the aspect of performance till to date has not been given adequate attention. In addition, those little desktop research which attempt to address the link between employment equity implementation and employee performance have been inconclusive and inconsistent. The evaluation of those studies were based on anecdotal evidence. There is huge amount of work to do to the level the playing field (Mazibuko & Govender, 2016). There are inherent challenges within employment equity implementation. The implementation of the employment equity has been believed to flail in performance of employees. Due to poor concrete evidence base of the relationship between the two, this study provides a fertile soil for investigating the relationship between employment equity implementation and employee performance.

The willingness of employees to contribute to the objectives of the business is ascribed to their emotional well-being, which is largely influenced by their treatment at the workplace. The manner in which designated employees are treated is critical to their performance as well as to the organisations success, posits Spector (2015). Employee skill change without concomitant transformation in systematic and institutional practices to alleviate discrimination in employment cannot bring good results. The efficiency and effectiveness of employee performance may stimulate overall growth of the financial institution. The problem of unavailability of skilled employees is not only found with the organization but it is worse outside the organisations as these experienced usually opt to be employed by well-established, big organisations. In support of this view, research carried out by Boosysen (2006) revealed that although there still growing organisations put efforts to retain black managers, they eventually leave because their organisations cannot afford the lucrative packages offered by the competitors. However, due to employment equity implementation some businesses succumb to performance challenges while others survive as a result of unique strong points. Although the relationship between employment equity implementation and employee performance has been hotly debated, there is a paucity of empirical evidence that reveals how the two concepts relate. The primary objective of this paper is to establish the effect of employment equity implementation on employee performance. The secondary objectives of this paper are: i) to understand the influence of affirmative action implementation on employee performance; and ii) to examine the effect of eradication of unfair discriminatory practices on employee performance. The relationship between employment equity implementation and employee performance is explained using Neo-institutional Theory. The next sections of the paper cover the following, namely literature review, methodology, findings, analysis, discussions and conclusion.

Literature Review

Employee performance is promoted by will, determination and ability, observes Darwish (2013). Pursuant to this line of thinking, some equity appointees attribute their poor performance to visible aspects that lie beneath the hierarchy in particularly inappropriate structures. On the contrary, employers are not obliged to employ people who are unable to perform the tasks of specific work nor keep employees who cannot execute their duties simply because they may learn. Employers should retain or appoint an employee on the basis of merit or the employees can be developed and trained to sufficiently equip themselves with skills to perform the duties of a specific job.

In respect of the different professional disciplines of African qualified employees, Rasool and Botha (2011) state that a remarkable number of them do not have the required and necessary experience to immediately deliver on the job. This is exemplified and evidenced by problems that occurred at Eskom, the country's biggest energy utility, where load-shedding and power failures experienced by the entire nation South Africa in the year 2009 were caused by incompetent affirmative appointees occupying higher positions of the organisation (Oosthuizen & Naidoo, 2010). The Chapter aims at answering the question of whether and, if so, how the employment equity implementation relates to employee performance.

Theoretical and Conceptual Background

Implementation of employment equity

The employment equity relates to the workplace policy that seeks to address previous injustices in employment opportunities encountered by employees from designated groups (Matyala, 2016). The central mission of the legislation is to dismantle the labour market to empower previously disadvantaged groups as a way of redressing past imbalances. Mohale (2015) confirms that all organisations are required by law to adhere to the non-discriminatory provisions and are subject to penalties should they fail to comply. In addition, designated organisations are required to introduce affirmative action measures. Given the stipulations of the employment equity, it can be argued that it is fair for organisations to provide opportunities to designated groups ahead of previously advantaged groups, in particular white males. Given that employees are regarded as desperate people who comply with anything put to them by the employer to such an extent that culture is affected, thereby compromising their dignity. Hence, employment equity has been adopted as an unbiased and fair legal policy that enforces sound employment practice.

Employment equity in relation to affirmative action

In South Africa, the Employment Equity Act was established to redress the adverse effects of apartheid (Ebrahim, 2016). This corrects the imbalance of history and builds proportional demographics for South Africa. Fair treatment and equal opportunity is a prime objective of the Employment Equity Act (Louw, 2015). The provisions of the Act widen the horizon of the disadvantaged. It would not be possible for organisations to empower reasonable numbers of employees from designated groups of their own free will. A study conducted by Noon (2010) on unfair discrimination found that positive discrimination gives the essential structural conditions that allows transformative and radical change for equality to happen. Hence, the Employment Equity Act was promulgated to enforce that transformation. Employment equity aims to raise the statistical number of representation of people from designated groups who are employed both in the private and public sectors. Most white people with disabilities are professionally qualified. Therefore they continue to occupy all management positions that are reserved for people with disabilities (Jensik, 2017). Africans with disabilities are dominant at the lower levels of the hierarchy of most organisations because they are not skilled. Harish, Frank and Christa (2012) observe that a lack of engagement which is meaningful, as well as fear of displacement among designated people, is creating enormous resistance to the legislation. According to Khumalo (2017), the current issues in labour constitute: a) organisational culture which is white male-dominated; b) not consistent in implementing employment equity measures; c) lack of shared understanding; and 4.) poor communication around employment equity. These elements become so rampant as long-term norms of discrimination in promotion are established, thus organisations go after mimetic forces of imitating each other (Sarkar, 2016).

Ana (2017) indicates that employers continue to report employment equity plans without showing significant strides of implementing those plans. Companies are expected to put much more investment through by channelling the necessary resources that can unlock the potential of employees from designated groups. Mike and Miller (2015) note that encouraging transparency can be a way of creating an atmosphere for companies to develop well-represented employment practices. One way of getting impetus, observed Mohale (2015), is that companies that are not complying with the Employment Equity Act are subject to be named and shamed in public. By naming and shaming them, a bad image is created to their prospective customers, suppliers, shareholders and employees. This can deter South African consumers from purchasing or doing business with those companies. Although employment equity law has been publicised and reinforced, lower occupational levels are still dominated by largely African employees. However, Ka'nkosi (2016) argues that employment equity beneficiaries are appointed at the expense of administrative efficiency. Black people are employed as tokens since they are not fully incorporated into organisations, which is witnessed by little decision-making authority or poor real genuine responsibility.

Employment equity in relation to unfair discrimination

The organisational and administrative culture at various workplaces is entrenched with discriminatory tendencies that result in a relative disadvantage to particular groups or certain individuals based on the group identity they belong to. Treatment of an unreasonable nature incorporates ignorance of input, violence, discriminatory treatment and micro-management (Oosthuizen, Tonelli and Mayer, 2019). Interactional justice relates to employees' concern with regard to the quality of interpersonal treatment that is rendered within the organisation. According to Burton and Hoobler (2011), interactional justice is the extent to which employees are treated with respect as well as dignity. Internationally fair procedures include four attributes, namely respect, justification, propriety questions and truthfulness. However, Boosysen (2006) studied employment equity at Money Bank in South Africa and found that although all key formal procedures and policies for good employee practice and relations which incorporates non-discrimination, inclusion, fairness, equity and equality at the workplace are written, they are not internalised as internal drivers of the organisation but are there merely for the sake of legislative compliance. This reveals that there may be misalignment between the formal policies in place and the execution of those policies which has a bearing on informal and formal organizational culture.

Interactional justice deals with informational and interpersonal justice. Interactional justice relates to respect and dignity, whilst informational justice incorporates transparency and communication. Employees' knowledge, experience and opinions must be acknowledged and used in order for them to feel appreciated and important. Since interactional justice expresses the manner in which employees are treated, managers have a crucial role to play that gives an overall impression of the organisation (Sesant, 2017). The organisational commitment and quality of work life as well as organisational citizenship behaviours of employees are much

influenced by the way they are treated by their managers. Roxanne (2016) postulates that the concept of employment equity also encompasses equal treatment and equal results. Equal treatment denotes doing away with direct discrimination and equal results entails doing away with structural discrimination. A study conducted by Noon (2010) on unfair discrimination found that positive discrimination gives the essential structural conditions that allows transformative and radical change for equality to happen. Direct discrimination is committed intentionally and hence reveals a higher degree of violation. Structural discrimination can only be noticed by checking the pattern of inequality. Structural discrimination is closely associated with structural inequalities which focus on aspects such as systems of gender, glass ceilings and misogynistic cultures (De Beer, 2016). An inclusive culture is crucial where employment equity is recognised and appreciated, constructive employment practices are supported and talent is identified. Indirect and direct discrimination in employment practice or policy against any person on the ground of disability, race and gender is eliminated under the Employment Equity Act.

Conversely, taking affirmative action steps that are aligned with the purpose of the Act cannot be categorised as unfair discrimination. The Employment Equity Act addresses the historic inequalities by providing preference of employment opportunities to previously disadvantaged employees. Ahmed (2015) posits that income differences in an organisation usually tally with gender and race. It is important to understand the differences between differentiation and discrimination. When employers apply different treatment, in particular excluding a given group (for example those with disabilities) through its employment policies it is called differentiation. However, if the differentiation has negative intentions, it is called discrimination. Spector (2015) claims that if there is proof that differentiation has been carried out on improper grounds it becomes discrimination. There are two categories of discrimination, namely indirect discrimination and direct discrimination. Direct discrimination takes place when an employer favours a group of employees as compared to another group of employees because of sex, nationality, disability, colour or race. Furthermore, indirect discrimination tends to become complicated to identify due to its nature, where policies seem to be accommodative to every employee. Discrimination can be alleged on the ground that is not highlighted in employment equity since those discriminatory practices mentioned are not exhaustive of all types and possibilities of discrimination.

Lee (2016) points out that discrimination against employees from designated groups that is exclusively based on inadequate experience should be avoided. If they are qualified or have the capability of acquiring the needed skills over a realistically given time for them to carry out their duties efficiently and effectively they should be appointed. However, it is important to note that sub-section 21(5) of the New Amendment Act is deleted, which stated that an employee who lacks experience should not be discriminated against by the employer when making decisions on the suitability of the candidate for the job. Samuel (2012) in a study on EE consideration and continued skills shortages in South Africa involving 160 training and development managers in both the private and public sectors, found that flexibility is required to accommodate highly competent professionals from the non-designated groups in order to avoid severe skills shortages. In light of this, the employer must conduct a rigorous evaluation of the whole workforce, incorporating policy documents and employment contracts to be reviewed that sets conditions and terms of employment which do not amount to unfair discrimination.

Importance of employment equity

The employers need to abide by employment equity in order to ensure a diversified workforce that encompasses employing suitably qualified people with disabilities. To this end, the disability code was promulgated to provide guidelines for employees and employers to enhance fair treatment and equal opportunities for employees with disabilities (Heerden, 2015). As such, interactional justice is related to the concept of workplace treatment. In addition, quality of work-life and ethics are acknowledged as indicators that relate to the sustainability and function of the organisation. The issue of quality of work-life relates to a socio-technical open system that is created to guarantee inter-dependence, self-involvement and autonomy at work. However, these candidates are not fully qualified and skilled to deliver on the expectations of the organisation. A study conducted by Mason and Roman (2015) focused on EE in retail sector in South Africa. They used mixed-methods approach involving 1 104 participants in various retailers and found that EE tends to be numbers-driven at the expense of competence. Hence, it is suicidal to the continued existence of the organisation.

Critical analysis of the shortfalls of the Employment Equity Act (EEA)

Compliance with legislation is overshadowing much-needed productive transformation in the workplace. A compliance approach may be witnessed as adopted by managers that are forced to abide with legislation in a bid to avoid hefty financial implications associated with failure to comply with the legislation. Abiding by rules as a result of regulatory requirements induces codes of compliance that lead to an entrenchment of the attitude of the "tick box mentality" (Opie & Roberts, 2017). In addition, organisations in South Africa face the challenge of retaining Black professionals as most Black professional employees frequently move from one job to another because there is a huge demand for experienced and skilled employment equity candidates (Carrim et al., 2017). For this reason, organisations have been hobbled to execute transformation at the managerial, senior managerial and top executive management levels. However, the rise in demand of employment equity appointees and the lack of skills and accommodation of these employees in the workplace hamper employment equity implementation as well as their performance in the workplace. A study carried out by Portnoi (2003) focused on EEA in South Africa's higher education sector using systematic review method and found that the dearth of qualified and skilled employees from the previously disadvantaged groups has led to a phenomenon called 'poaching'.

Fundamental approaches to employee performance

Employee performance is a crucial aspect in which the main contribution of employees is through work behaviour. According to Sindelar (2016), employee performance has two different approaches, namely contextual performance and task performance. It is most likely that contextual and task employee performance reveal job results that are different. The importance of task performance. Cesário (2017) refers to task performance as the proficiency of an employee in undertaking activities that add value to the technical core of the organisation. Task performance relates to the outcomes and behaviours of specific employee activities. It focuses on quality and efficiency, but fights against innovation. The contribution of the employee to the organisation can be indirect or direct. Indirect contribution incorporates those in the managerial and supervisory designations, while direct contribution denotes involvement in the production of commodities. Ivan, et al. (2012) proclaim that task performance is multi-dimensional and encompasses concepts of performance such as managerial proficiency, supervision proficiency, oral and communication proficiency, job task proficiency and non-job task performance. Task performance components in the financial industry include aspects such as customer-centeredness and innovation, which strive to give superb customer service. A requirement of excellent work quality competences to an employee's skills is the building of innovation competencies.

The contribution of contextual performance. According to Ivan, et al. (2012), contextual performance entails the aspects of employee performance that enhance and maintain the psychological climate and social network of the organisation that anchor technical tasks. Contextual performance incorporates the entire behaviours and activities of any work at any position that can assist the organisation to accomplish its objectives. Contextual performance includes giving support and adherence to the rules of the organisation, efforts exerted towards the completion of a task, co-operation and assistance to the activities of the organisation. Cesário (2017) states that contextual performance is sub-divided into two categories, proactive contextual performance behaviours and stabilising contextual performance behaviours. Proactive contextual performance behaviours relate to personal initiatives, while stabilising contextual performance behaviour entails organisational citizenship behaviour that includes conscientiousness and courtesy. Proactive contextual performance behaviours focus on the transformation of organisational processes and employee work procedures. Stabilising contextual performance behavior strives to ensure a smooth flow of the existing state of performance. Contextual performance is seen as organisational citizenship behaviours (Devonish, 2013).

Empirical Review and Hypothesis Development

The following hypothesis were developed backed by empirical reviews:

H₁ There is a significant relationship between employment equity implementation and employee performance

A study carried out by Hinks (2010) focused on EE and job satisfaction in South Africa involving formal sector employees between the age group of 18 to 65. They found that while job satisfaction of African is positively associated with EE legislation in contrast the job satisfaction of coloured and white is negatively connected to EE legislation. Samuel (2012) in a study on EE consideration and continued skills shortages in South Africa involving 160 training and development managers in both the private and public sectors, found that flexibility is required to accommodate highly competent professionals from the non-designated groups in order to avoid severe skills shortages. In light of this, the employer must conduct an extensive evaluation of the whole workforce, incorporating policy documents and employment contracts to be reviewed that sets conditions and terms of employment which do not amount to unfair discrimination. Thomas (2003) carried out a study on EE practices in South Africa involving 21 companies. They conducted interviews to 114 employees and results revealed that although companies are still slow in achieving EE, progress and effort has been made in particular areas. There is pressure for organisations in South Africa to deliver innovation in order to satisfy customers and promote organisational growth.

Due to the increased reporting and regulatory demands of Employment Equity, organisations tend to employ less qualified and inexperienced candidates, which is hampering employee performance. In addition, these companies are required to make notable contributions to the transformation, growth and development of the country as a whole. However there remains little progress and transformation in terms of the representation of designated employees at middle, senior and top senior management levels (Mhlanga, 2018). Government compels the organisations to engage in real transformation as it deepens its radical legislation. Mapping the relationship between employment equity implementation and employee performance protects the organisations from lurching from one problem to the other. Therefore, organisations are compelled to adopt and implement Employment Equity legislation in a rational manner. Organisations that believe in their own capacity usually find themselves shifting from victims of circumstances to having control over circumstances. Inclusive participation by the organisation to take the responsibility of complying with employment equity expectations rather than embarking on protest reflects good corporate citizenship. The diverse workforce that employment equity brings promotes efficiency in the organisation and economic development in the country (Botes, 2014).

H₂ There is a significant relationship between removal of unfair discrimination and employee performance

A study conducted by Noon (2010) on unfair discrimination found that positive discrimination gives the essential structural conditions that allows transformative and radical change for equality to happen. However, Boosysen (2006) studied EE at Money Bank in South Africa and found that although all key formal procedures and policies for good employee practice and relations which incorporates non-discrimination, inclusion, fairness, equity and equality at the workplace are written, they are not internalised as internal drivers

of the organisation but are there merely for the sake of legislative compliance. Fair treatment leads to quality of work life and job satisfaction. Interactional justice is related to the concept of workplace treatment. Employees perceive fairness when managers engage in behaviours such as integrity, showing concern, consistency, proper communication, respect and courtesy (Mazibuko and Govender, 2016:1). Quality of work-life and ethics are acknowledged as indicators that relate to the sustainability and function of the organisation. The issue of quality of work-life relates to a socio-technical open system that is created to guarantee inter-dependence, self-involvement and autonomy at work. There is no doubt that when employment equity implementation succeeds it does so if, amongst other things, the working conditions reflect cordial relationships amongst employees.

The findings of the study conducted by Booysen (2007) revealed that employees prefer to work in an inclusive company in which everyone is valued, than an organisation which offers lucrative remuneration packages but not value them. A confirmation of this also comes from the findings of Cruz (2006) who states that it is not only money which attracts Black managers but an exclusionary organisational systems and practices pushes Black employees away from the company. This indicates that job hopping by Black managers is not only fueled by financial gain, but rather due to push factors of non-supportive practices of employees and organisational systems which are exclusionary. Fair treatment has been touted for leading to quality of work life and job satisfaction. Employees perceive fairness when managers engage in behaviours such as integrity, showing concern, consistency, proper communication, respect and courtesy (Mazibuko & Govender, 2017). The competitiveness of the market needs businesses to have best calibre employees (Este, 2017). In this case, competitiveness is maintained through raising the bar of performance which is enhanced when businesses focus their attention on stimulating best employee performance.

H₃ There is a significant relationship between affirmative action and employee performance

Ahmed, Sultana, Paul and Azeem (2013) conducted a study on employee performance evaluation and found that with the current dynamics toward knowledge-based capitalism, maintaining knowledgeable and talented employees is critical. A study carried out by Portnoi (2003) focused on EEA in South Africa's higher education sector using systematic review method and found that the dearth of qualified and skilled employees from the previously disadvantaged groups has led to a phenomenon called 'poaching'. A research carried out by Boosysen (2006) revealed that although there still growing organisations put efforts to retain black managers, they eventually leave because their organisations cannot afford the lucrative packages offered by the competitors. The study conducted by Hideg and Ferris (2014) focused on EE policies in Canada involving a survey of 81 employees and the results revealed that non-beneficiaries view EE policy as a threat. Similarly, a study carried out by Hideg, Michela and Ferris (2011) focused on counter negative reactions of non-beneficiaries to EE and found that non-beneficiaries may only support the EE policy when they are afforded a chance to be instrumental participants in the development of the policy. The problem of unavailability of skilled employees is not only found with the organization but it is worse outside the organisations as these experienced usually opt to be employed by well-established, big organisations. However, the increased demand of potential employment equity appointees which causes them to leave the company soon after capacitated with skills, has caused employers to view capacity building as a fuel for turnover of potential employment equity appointees rather than a tool to improve their performance in the organization. An employee from designated groups can develop to be a productive and well-adjusted employee in an atmosphere of co-operation, goodwill and acceptance. The relationship between employment equity implementation and employee performance is explained using Neo-institutional Theory.

Theoretical framework

A Neo-institutional Theory- The theory's key thrust is to identify forces that affect organisational procedures and behaviours such as diversity, inclusiveness and fairness that built the competitive advantage. There are three key pillars of neo-institutional theory, namely normative pillar, regulative pillar and cultural cognitive pillar (Harish, Frank and Christa, 2012). Normative pillar entails the systems of norms and values which determine moral responsibility, duty, professionalism, roles, social obligations and expectations. Consistent with the tenets of normative pillar, line managers, HR personnel and corporate leaders assist to determine the normative expectations and values in relation to employment equity in which an organisation reveals functional necessities that sustain employee performance within the organisation (Matyala, 2016). Regulative pillar refers to the conveyances of power, laws and rules, encompassing power within the economic transaction. Organisations in South Africa are affected by plethora of diverse instructions, agency directives, regulations and public laws (Squire, 2015). The regulative pillar of the organisations is handled by standard operating procedures, power systems and relational governance of employment equity, as well as objectivised mandates as coercive standards for practice and policy formation of HR functions. Therefore, under regulative pillar, the legitimacy of the organisation is maintained by rules-based legal sanctions and coercive mechanisms. Another pillar is the cultural-cognitive element, relates to the formation of shared values of social reality. Unlike normative expectations and rules, the pillar of cultural-cognitive is associated with shared conceptions and taken-for-granted beliefs such as scripts, routines and rituals. In relation to this study, these aspects are critical in improving employee performance through diversity and inclusivity.

Research and Methodology

Research approach and design

For this study, a positivism philosophy was adopted. Positivism relies on quantifiable observations that assist in analysing statistics (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). This study used the quantitative research. In this research, the descriptive method was used to answer the research questions. The descriptive study extensively expresses the cause-effect relationship (Harrison, Birks, Franklin

and Mills, 2017). The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship employment equity and employee performance through the use of numeric and statistical tests.

Target population, sample procedure and sample size

In this study, the target population comprised of all employees who occupy lower and middle level positions, except those from the historically advantaged group as well as foreign nationals who do not hold line management and human resource management positions in South Africa. Therefore, the target population group was 302. The stratified sampling technique break down the population into groups or ‘strata’. This ensures that each group is represented in the sample (Sekaran & Bougie, 2014). The groups include Indians, Coloureds, Africans, Women and Employees with disability. For this study, the target population of 302 is separated into sub-groups (75 Indians, 150 African Black, 40 Coloureds (0 South African Chinese), 24 White women and 13 Employees with disability) referred to as “strata” using disproportionate, stratified sampling. For the researcher to eliminate sampling bias, the stratified sampling technique and simple random sampling technique without replacement were utilised. The sample size for this study was 172 respondents. In this case, the simple random sampling technique without replacement was utilised to pick the members from each stratum. Since random sampling without replacement does not permit the same element of the target population to be chosen in the sample more than once, it has greater efficiency as compared to a random sampling with replacement.

Data collection and analysis

In this study, data was collected through a structured questionnaire to assess the relationship between employment equity implementation and employee performance. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 for Windows assists to break the gathered raw data into simple tabular forms of a quantitative nature that makes for easy assimilation and understanding. The multiple regression was utilised in this study. The respondents were guaranteed that no names would be mentioned when results are reported and that their responses would be specifically used for statistical purposes. The questionnaires that were completed by respondents are kept in a safe place and only shredded after a five (5) year period.

Findings and Discussions

Findings

The questionnaire was distributed to a sample of 172 respondents from the chosen organisation. Approximately 72 % was the response rate and the usable responses considered were 95. In terms of biological information, for this study there was an even spread of males and females. For this study, 77.90% of the employees are up to the age of 35 years old. In this study, 87.4% of the respondents’ employees did not have more than 9 years of experience. According to race, in this study the least were White women, followed by Coloureds, Indians and the African has the highest. Males comprised 49.5%, whilst 50% were females. In terms of the educational qualifications, the study found that the majority of respondents (74.70%) had degree and diploma as their highest qualifications.

The multiple linear regression analysis was used to establish whether the independent variable (employment equity: unfair discrimination; and affirmative action) predicts (influences) the dependent variable (employee performance). The multiple linear regression analysis was also utilised in determining which among the independent variable (employment equity: unfair discrimination and affirmative action) makes a higher contribution to the variation of the dependent variable (employee performance). Table 1 reports the results relating to employment equity and employee performance.

Table 1: Model summary (N=95)

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the estimate |
|-------|-------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .228a | .119 | 0.27 | .15211 |

Predictors (Influencers): (Constant) (employment equity: unfair discrimination and affirmative action)
 b. Dependent variable: employee performance

The (R-square) value shown in the ‘model summary’ above assisted to explain the variance in the dependent variable (employee performance). Table 1 pointed out that the value of (R-square) was 0.119. This reflects that the independent variable (employment equity: unfair discrimination and affirmative action) predicts (influences) the dependent variable (employee performance) by 11.9%. Hence left out 88.1% (100%-11.9%) not explained. This means that other independent variables that were not considered in this study which are crucial in explaining employee performance. Employee performance is promoted by will, determination and ability, observes Darwish (2013). Some equity appointees attribute their poor performance to visible aspects that lie beneath the hierarchy in particularly inappropriate structures. On the contrary, employers are not obliged to employ people who are unable to perform the tasks of specific work nor keep employees who cannot execute their duties simply because they may learn.

Table 1 analysed the coefficients that allow one to make a comparison as to which of the two sub-independent variables (employment equity: unfair discrimination and affirmative action) makes the highest contribution to the variation in employee performance. Hence, the Beta standardised coefficients were utilised in making comparisons. The results indicated that unfair discrimination is the most predicting (influencing) variable that contributes the highest to the variation in employee performance ($\beta= 0.284$; $p= 0.000$). Affirmative action did not predict (influence) employee performance ($\beta= -0.104$; $p= 0.140$).

Table 2: Coefficients (N=95)

| Model | | Unstandardized | Standardized | |
|-------|-----------------------|----------------|--------------|------|
| | | d Coefficient | Coefficient | |
| | | B | Std. Error | Sig. |
| 1 | (Constant) | 3.455 | .270 | .000 |
| | Unfair discrimination | -.235 | .121 | .000 |
| | Affirmative action | -.206 | .117 | .140 |

Dependent variable: employee performance

Ranking of standardized coefficient, beta (B) (N=95)

| Independent variables | Standardized coefficient beta | Rank |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|------|
| Unfair discrimination | .284 | 1 |
| Affirmative action | -.104 | 2 |

The statistical significance of the regression model tests was carried out using ANOVA. ANOVA tested whether the regression model is a perfect descriptor of the relationship between predictor (influencer) variables (employment equity: unfair discrimination and affirmative action) and the dependent variable (employee performance). Hence considering the results in Table 2, the model was a perfect descriptor of the connection between independent variables (employment equity: unfair discrimination and affirmative action) and the dependent variable (employee performance) ($F= 14.106$; $p=0.001$). Therefore, this indicates that the independent variables (employment equity: unfair discrimination and affirmative action) are significant in explaining the variation in the dependent variable (employee performance). Employees from different races, who come to the organisation as a result of employment equity, sometimes become incompatible to the extent that their conflicts stifle the effectiveness and efficiency of the organisation. If these workforce conflicts are improperly managed, they can end up as personal issues that affect the morale of employees.

Table 3: Chi-square

| <i>Employment equity and employee performance</i> | | | |
|--|---------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | Df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 27.152 ^a | 12 | 0,036 |
| N of Valid Cases | 95 | | |
| <i>Elimination of discrimination and the improvement of employee performance</i> | | | |
| | Value | Df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 27.415 | 12 | 0,013 |
| N of Valid Cases | 95 | | |
| <i>Maintenance of affirmative action and the improvement of employee performance</i> | | | |
| | Value | Df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 7.381 ^a | 12 | 0,831 |
| N of Valid Cases | 95 | | |

In Table 3, Pearson’s Chi-Square test result of $p<0.03$ was under the cut-off parameter that is Pearson’s significance ($p<0.05$). The results of the statistical tests reveal a significant relationship between employment equity implementation and employee performance. Hence, the hypothesis was accepted. The willingness of employees to contribute to the objectives of the business is ascribed to their emotional well-being, which is largely influenced by their treatment at the workplace. The manner in which designated employees are treated is critical to their performance as well as to the organisations success, posits Spector (2015). In Table 3, Pearson’s Chi-Square test result of $p<0.013$ was under the cut-off parameter: Pearson’s significance ($p<0.05$). The results of the statistical tests reveal a significant relationship between the elimination of discrimination and the improvement of employee performance at the

workplace. Hence, the hypothesis was accepted. The complexity of the work environment nowadays pushes organisations to adopt proactive measures in order to determine fitness of the employees from designated groups for particular positions. The competitiveness of the market needs businesses to have best calibre employees (Este, 2017). At the same time Pearson's Chi-Square test result of $p < 0.8$ exceeded the cut-off parameter: Pearson's significance ($p < 0.05$). The results of the statistical tests reveal an insignificant relationship between the maintenance of affirmative action and the improvement of employee performance at the workplace. Hence, the hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that there is positive relationship between employment equity implementation and employee performance. Within the concept of employment equity there are two key aspects, namely elimination of unfair discrimination and affirmative action. The results of the statistical tests revealed a significant relationship between the elimination of discrimination and the improvement of employee performance at the workplace. These results relate to the study carried out by Aidla (2013) focused on examining how perception of negative inequity at work influence individual behaviour. The findings of the study revealed that employees tend to change their outcome which eventually result in lowered performance. Aidla (2013)'s study did not directly address the relation between employment equity and employee performance. Hence the current study provides a novel knowledge that employment equity implementation can lead to improved employee performance. Employees that experience equity have high opportunities for satisfaction which leads to improved employee performance. It is of great importance for organisations to give priority to employee equity to make sure that employees perceive fair treatment at the workplace. This is in consistent with the Institutional theory which asserts that when employees perceive a sense distress from inequality, they usually respond by limiting their efforts to a standard where they see it equate with the outcomes they get. Whereas the other results of the statistical tests revealed an insignificant relationship between the maintenance of affirmative action and the improvement of employee performance at the workplace. A study carried out by Mula (2014) focused on the impact of Employment Equity legislation on employee engagement – in Gauteng, South Africa. The findings revealed the employment equity legislation does not enhance employee engagement. Mula (2014)'s study did not give a clear relationship between affirmative action and employee performance. Thus this study provides new knowledge that the enforcement of affirmative action does not affect employee performance.

Hence, the work environment is deemed to be cordial or conducive if it is not associated with intimidation, unfair workplace discrimination and workplace harassment. There is no doubt that when employment equity implementation succeeds it does so if, amongst other things, the working conditions reflect cordial relationships amongst employees. The findings of the study conducted by Boosysen (2006) revealed that employees prefer to work in an inclusive company in which everyone is valued, than an organisation which offers lucrative remuneration packages but not value them. A confirmation of this also comes from the findings of Cruz's (2006) who states that it is not only money which attracts Black managers but an exclusionary organisational systems and practices pushes Black employees away from the company. This indicates that job hopping by Black managers is not only fuelled by financial gain, but rather due to push factors of non-supportive practices of employees and organisational systems which are exclusionary. Hence, successful employment equity implementation needs a corporate culture that accommodates diverse approaches and styles. Proactive, planned measures must be the centre of focus within the organisation for dismantling institutional sexism and racism. The employers and managers must ensure that fairness and inequity is maintained at all levels of decision making in the organisation. This makes employees secured and safe resulting in realisation of higher employee performance. In some cases, employees may arrange to meet with their managers to discuss verbally in which a healthier agreement can be reached in terms of finding out an equilibrium between compensation and effort.

Conclusions

The study sought to establish the relationship between employment equity implementation and employee performance. For the sake of brevity, the findings of this study proved that there is positive relationship between employment equity implementation and employee performance. The results of the statistical tests proved a significant relationship between the elimination of discrimination and the improvement of employee performance at the workplace. Organisations should make sure that they eliminate unfair discrimination at all costs. This can improve employee performance. The situation of high inequity demoralises employees resulting in drastic decrease in their performance. High degree of demoralisation creates undesirable attitude that degenerate performance abilities of employees at the workplace. To prevent the misalignment of employment equity implementation and employee performance, management should always be alert to discrimination practices such as condoning employees who discriminate against others, only advancing employees from designated groups, as well as engaging in practices of unequal pay. The main limitation of this study is that it focused on quantitative research approach only. As such, this study ignored the contributions that might be brought by utilising the qualitative research approach. However, considering the limited time, it was not practical for the study to employ mixed research approach. Therefore, it is recommended that further studies should apply qualitative research approach in order to widen knowledge on the relationship between the variables.

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