

Social Impact, Organizations and Society

The Contemporary Role
of Corporate Social Responsibility

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9 Relevance of male perspective on gender diversity management

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Introduction

The significance of the social impact of organizations is undeniable. Although frequently explored (e.g. Rawhouser et al., 2019; Siemieniako et al., 2021), the issue requires further study (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2022) due to the complexity and lack of conceptual clarity (Perrini et al., 2021). Social impact invariably refers to the social value that a company can create for communities outside the boundaries of the organization. It can also be broadly defined as the outcomes that benefit the intended targets (Rawhouser et al., 2019): the beneficiaries and other recipients of the intervention carried out (Hadad & Găucă, 2014; Perrini et al., 2021). It has been analyzed at different levels, on a continuum from the individual to the systemic, thus from the micro to the macro levels (Siemieniako et al., 2021).

The positive social impact of organizations can be a consequence of diversity management, as it aims to reduce inequality and improve the situation of members of minority groups, such as women. Changing the status of women in organizations leads to an improvement in their economic situation, strengthens their autonomy, and boosts empowerment. Thus, it can be considered a positive social impact of organizations on the micro level. In addition, long-term effects on the macro level can be expected as new female role models emerge and motivate young women to aspire to higher positions, influence the attitude of men toward working women in general, or induce parents to invest more resources in their daughters' education and health care (Bohnet, 2017). However, to achieve these positive effects of diversity management, especially when dealing with gender inequalities between men and women, the standpoints of both genders need to be considered. Instead, most studies on gender inequality refer to women (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015; Dashper, 2019). By contrast, research on this topic that takes into account men's perception of gender inequality is rather rare (e.g., Flood, 2015; Essig & Soparnot, 2019), even though focusing solely on the perspectives of women can jeopardize the success of diversity management and therefore undermine the related positive social impact of organizations.

Focusing only on one gender can result in increased identification with one's own gender group, discrimination against the other, as well as exacerbating competition and conflicts between men and women. This can be interpreted as a negative impact on the micro level and might reinforce negative trends in societies, such as polarization or cancel culture, on the macro level. Therefore, considering men's perspectives is of critical importance.

In addition, since comparative studies on diversity management involving two or more countries are rare (Klarsfeld et al., 2016), the chapter fills this gap by comparing Generation Y men from two countries: Poland and Germany. These countries differ in the progressivity of the implementation of gender-related diversity management practices. According to the Gender Development Index (Human Development Reports, 2022), which measures gender inequalities in achieving three basic dimensions of human development, the position of women in both markets is different (GDI value: Germany 0.972; Poland 1.007). Similarly, there are differences with regard to the Gender Inequality Index (GII value: Germany 0.084; Poland 0.115) (Human Development Reports, 2022) and Gender Equality Index (GEI value: Germany 68.7; Poland 57.7) (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022). This means that Germany is a country with lower gender inequality. In addition, our study focuses on a significant generation on the labor market, the Millennials, who exhibit greater awareness of gender inequalities and have different perceptions of discrimination compared to other generations (Baralt et al., 2020).

The objective of the study is to determine the perception of gender diversity management in the workplace by men from Generation Y in two distinct labor markets: Poland and Germany. The main research questions are as follows:

RQ1. How do Generation Y men from Poland and Germany perceive gender-related diversity management in the workplace?

RQ2: Do Generation Y men from Poland and Germany perceive threats arising from the promotion of women in their career development?

The chapter is organized as follows. First, the concept of diversity management and its relevance to social impact is explained. Next, the research procedure and the results are presented. Conclusions, implications, and limitations are formulated at the end of the chapter.

Diversity management and the social impact of organizations

Gender diversity management in the workplace

Diversity management is a management approach widely used in most industrialized countries (Köllen, 2021). It can be defined as 'a set of organizational policies and practices aimed at recruiting, retaining and managing employees of diverse backgrounds and identities and creating a culture in which everyone is

equally enabled to perform and achieve organizational objectives and personal development' (Syed & Tariq, 2017). Both researchers and practitioners have strived to understand this concept and its effects on organizations and societies (Roberson, 2019; Yadav & Lenka, 2020; Garg & Sangwan, 2021). Originally introduced as a way of compensating for gender and racial discrimination, today diversity management refers to the wide range of inequalities (e.g. based on age, ethnicity, disability status, or religion). However, gender inequality is still predominant and of great importance.

Gender inequality in the workplace is a complex phenomenon (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). For years, organizations have made extraordinary efforts to empower women by implementing diversity management programs and practices. Numerous activities focus on the advancement of women by addressing issues that hinder female employees from realizing their potential and achieving their professional goals. Organizations introduce woman-oriented human resources practices (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015) that focus on hiring, training, or promoting female employees (e.g. employment quotas for women). Women-only offerings, such as training, coaching, or mentoring of female employees provide women with strategies that help them to increase their confidence and assertiveness, develop their networks, and make career-related decisions more consciously (Dashper, 2019).

Gender-oriented diversity management efforts are not directed exclusively at women. Practices such as promoting an organizational culture that values differences, creating bias-free HRM systems, or using instruments that support work-life balance aim at creating supportive conditions for diversity management in general (Cox & Blake, 1991). More and more authors point out that research on diversity and diversity management has the potential to foster equality and social justice (e.g. Janssens & Zanoni, 2021). Janssens and Zanoni (2021) argue that actions taken in the context of diversity, such as establishing work standards, training employees, or raising awareness of women's rights, can bring about positive social change. Social change outcomes can be expressed in the form of recognition, respect for women's labor rights, better status and pay, social protection for women, and community formation through new types of relationships. Research also shows that gender diversity, diversity management, and organizational inclusion can be effective in predicting workplace happiness (Mousa, 2021). As gender inequality is considered a key driver of poverty (African Development Bank, 2016), diversity management helps women achieve material security and independence by supporting the growth of the careers of female employees. This could lead to substantial improvements for women around the world, as results from different countries show that women with good jobs are less likely to be victims of domestic violence (e. g. Viero et al., 2021).

In conclusion, diversity management practices improve the situation of women as members of minority groups and, more generally, redress inequalities

between men and women in society. In this way, they also contribute to the positive social impact of organizations. However, these positive outcomes can be undermined or even outweighed by the negative effects of ignoring the perspective of male employees.

The male perspective on gender-related diversity management in the workplace

Gender-related diversity management and developing long-term solutions for organizations require focusing on the needs of both genders, not just women. Despite this, only a few studies have examined gender inequality from the perspective of men (e.g. Essig & Soparnot, 2019; Coron, 2020). Ignoring men's perspectives can have negative effects that threaten the success of diversity management and, consequently, jeopardize the positive social impact of the organizations associated with it. This can be explained in the context of 'modern' discrimination (Cortina, 2008) that affects both genders. For example, male employees working part-time, due to occupying gender-incongruent roles, might experience less career goal-related progress, less development of their professional abilities, and a lower rate of advancement than full-time men and part-time or full-time women (van Osch & Schaveling, 2020). Furthermore, men who participate in caregiving duties are punished in the form of rejection and are seen not only as 'lesser workers' but also as 'lesser men' (Harrington, 2022).

The perception of diversity management may depend on gender. Elvi and Tunjungsari (2022) find that female employees perceive diversity management more positively than male employees. Cassino (2016) argues that men, who perceive discrimination as a zero-sum game, tend to believe that actions that support women must hurt men. From this perspective, diversity management practices appear to be threatening and discriminatory. Thus, failure to consider men's needs in diversity management can cause some problems. Firstly, if men do not perceive any advantages for themselves resulting from diversity management, either because they see it as a zero-sum game, or they experience social sanctions for making use of its measures like part-time hours, the success of diversity management can be diminished by the lack of commitment and support of men, or even torpedoed by their resistance (Jones et al., 2022). Secondly, men who feel discriminated and threatened can increasingly identify with their own gender group, seek ways to defend themselves, and even fight against women they may, in general, perceive as the group that is doing the oppressing (Cassino, 2016). The resulting conflicts cause stress, tension, and dissatisfaction for both women and men. This not only hinders women in reaching their professional goals, but also has the potential to deteriorate their position compared to the situation without diversity management.

While the phenomena described above affect social impacts at the micro level, it is important to note that there is also the danger of macro level impacts. Policies

that ignore the concerns and needs of men leave great space for so-called alt-right and masculinist/antifeminist movements that use the claim that feminism devalues men and masculinity as an effective means of promoting and spreading their ideology, as well as a way to heat up the discussion in general (Nagle, 2017; de Boise, 2019). The development of such phenomena as increased identification with one's own gender groups and the escalation of intergender conflicts that increase stereotypical perceptions and discrimination tendencies can lead to the emergence of problems in society, such as the cultivation of stereotypical, hostile images of 'old white men' or cancel culture (Clark, 2020). Cancel culture can be defined as 'the withdrawal of support for individuals who have acted in a way deemed unacceptable or problematic related to social media viewership' (Mueller, 2021), which encompasses strategies to shame individuals, ranging from limiting access to public platforms, damaging reputations, or even ending careers (Norris, 2020). Critics warn that this process, which often starts with legitimate criticism, has the tendency to uncontrollable escalation, where cancel culture threatens classical liberal values and weakens the norms of open debate and toleration of differences (Norris, 2020). With open discussions lacking and the corroboration of one's views gaining the upper hand, there is a real danger of the belief polarization effect, by means of which like-minded individuals transform into more extreme versions of themselves (Talisie, 2019). Talisie (2019) points out that the belief polarization phenomenon can initiate a broader polarization dynamic that can ultimately even dissolve the democratic capacities of citizens, defined as openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices, respect or tolerance of ambiguity (Council of Europe, 2018). Thus, the negative effects of ignoring the male perspective can go far beyond the boundaries of organizations. If organizations want to become a fair workplace and have a positive social impact by contributing to the development of a sustainable society, they must include the perspective of both genders in their efforts. Therefore, the following section focuses on the perspective of men.

Materials and methods

The research was carried out among Generation Y men in two distinct labor markets: Poland and Germany*. A quantitative approach was applied. To collect data, an online survey was used. The questionnaire was prepared in German and then translated by two researchers into Polish. The equivalence of the meanings was checked within the procedure. The measures were adopted from the relevant literature. Due to the exploratory nature of the study, based on previous research (Ely et al., 2011; Vongalis-Macrow, 2014), a list of threats to professional development of men arising from the promotion of women in their career development was developed. Participants were asked to evaluate the items on a 6-point Likert scale.

Data were collected from 407 Gen Y male employees from Poland and Germany, two culturally different countries with geographical proximity that

struggle with similar problems caused by changes in the environment (Bugaj et al., 2022) and differ notably in gender equality (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022). The convenience sample was heterogeneous in terms of sociodemographic characteristics (education, having children, and seniority). Participation in the survey was voluntary and respondents received no incentives. After data reduction due to data gaps, the analysis was performed taking into account 381 correctly completed questionnaires.

All respondents were born between 1984 and 1995. Most of them have higher education (65%); more than five years of work experience (64%) and are married/ in a relationship (69%) without children (66%) (Table 9.1).

Table 9.1 Sample characteristics

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Poland – frequency</i>	<i>Germany – frequency</i>	<i>Total frequency</i>
Year of birth	1984	16	7	23
	1985	31	8	39
	1986	20	14	34
	1987	22	12	34
	1988	22	10	32
	1989	14	12	26
	1990	20	14	34
	1991	14	13	27
	1992	13	21	34
	1993	8	11	19
	1994	14	22	36
1995	16	17	43	
Education	Elementary school	3	18	21
	Vocational training	7	27	34
	High school	55	25	80
	Bachelor	41	61	102
	Master	91	36	127
Seniority in positions at work	PhD	13	4	17
	None yet	6	5	11
	Up to one year	0	11	11
	One to two years	9	15	24
	Two to three years	16	10	26
	Three to four years	6	26	32
	Four to five years	22	13	35
Marital status	More than five years	151	91	242
	Married/in a relationship	151	111	262
Having children	Single	59	60	119
	Yes	92	17	109
Total	No	118	134	252
		210	171	381

Source: Own elaboration.

During the analysis, descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA were used to present the data and determine the main effects. The analysis was performed in STATISTICA software.

Results

Perception of gender-related diversity management in the workplace

Generally, the attitude of men toward gender-related diversity in the workplace is rather ambivalent. Most of the participants perceived the organization (an employer) that emphasizes diversity management positively (287; 75%). Only 28% of Polish and 20% of German men said that an employer who emphasizes their commitment to diversity management is rather unattractive to them. However, data suggest that gender-related diversity in the workplace is not perceived by them as a relevant issue. They are neutral when it comes to the commitment of men to diversity management ($m = 3.12$; $SD = 1.01$; scale ranging from 1 to 5, unless otherwise noted). The respondents are not interested in leading (234 individuals; 61%) and participating (206 individuals; 54%) in gender-related diversity management projects aimed at men. Although 52% of German men expressed their willingness to participate in diversity management training courses, 59% of Polish men opposed it.

The respondents are divided in terms of the success of diversity management without the participation of men. Fifty-four percent believe that without men's participation, diversity management cannot succeed, and 39% declare that only when men become involved in diversity management will the issue be taken seriously in companies and other institutions. However, the Polish participants are more convinced that the participation of men is not a basis for its efficiency ($F(1, 379) = 4.19, p < 0.05$).

Only 26% (101 individuals) agree that companies ignore their needs in diversity practices. However, there is a clear tendency for German respondents to be more extreme in their beliefs than Poles. German men do not feel ignored ($m = 2.55$) as Polish men do ($m = 3.01$). Following their opinions, organizations take into account the needs of men in diversity management ($F(1, 379) = 17.80, p < 0.001$). It should be noted that only 50 participants (13%) admitted having experienced discrimination in the workplace (36 from Poland; 14 from Germany). Sixty-four percent of them (244 individuals) would like to reduce their work hours to care for their children, but 33% (127) fear a disadvantageous position that might result from it (51% of Germans and only 19% of Polish men).

Respondents from Germany and Poland have a different opinion when it comes to targeting diversity management only for women ($F(1, 379) = 4.44, p < 0.05$). In general, 31% (119 individuals) agree with that statement. As before, German men have a greater tendency to disagree with the statement that

‘Diversity management is all about promoting women’ ($m = 2.77$). Furthermore, 25% (96 individuals) believe that ‘Diversity management should take more into account the needs of men’. In that case, men from Poland and Germany also have a different opinion ($F(1, 379) = 17.65, p < 0.001$).

Diversity management supporting women in the workplace: Threats perceived by men

Most of the participants, both from Poland and Germany, have positive attitudes toward promoting women in their career development (55%; 211 individuals). However, they do not see the benefits of this practice for themselves (69%; 381 individuals). Interestingly, 20% of the respondents (77 individuals), regardless of their nationality, feel discriminated by these activities.

Men in both countries do not view the promotion of women as a threat to their career development (Table 9.2).

Table 9.2 Threats to men’s professional development arising from the promotion of women in their career development – men’s opinions

<i>Potential threats</i>	<i>Mean Poland</i>	<i>Mean Germany</i>	<i>Mean total</i>	<i>Mode</i>	<i>Mode – quantity</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>F-value</i>
Employment quotas for women	3.59	3.00	3.33	1	89	1.74	10.991***
Changes in organizational culture resulting from the implementation of diversity management	3.17	2.06	2.68	1	136	1.63	48.858***
Women-only leadership	2.96	2.30	2.66	1	131	1.60	16.891***
Special programs to support/promote women	2.99	2.15	2.62	1	136	1.58	28.826***
Coaching only for women	3.08	1.94	2.56	1	148	1.63	52.499***
Women-only networking	3.11	1.77	2.50	1	162	1.62	77.095***
Mentoring only for women	2.99	1.74	2.43	1	155	1.55	74.415***
Flexible working-time models	2.69	1.65	2.22	1	195	1.53	49.2945***

Scale: from 1 to 6; 1 – the lowest rating

*** $p < 0.001$

Source: Own elaboration.

However, the differences in assessments depending on the country are noticeable ($F(8, 372) = 14.82, p < 0.001$). Polish men treat these actions as a greater threat. Among the activities that promote women's careers, women's employment quotas are the most threatening to them. This is a bigger problem for Polish men, while German men perceived it as less of a threat ($F(1, 379) = 10.99, p < 0.001$).

Furthermore, the men surveyed mostly do not see any danger for themselves in women being supported by organizations ($m = 2.93$; $SD = 1.17$). Similarly, they do not see any negative consequences for women arising from discrimination against men ($m = 2.75$; $SD = 1.12$). However, there is a difference in opinions depending on the country. In both cases, Poles perceived the practices as the greatest danger ($F(1, 379) = 8.26, p < 0.01$) and are more convinced that discrimination against men has negative consequences for women ($F(1, 379) = 49.17, p < 0.001$).

Beyond the country, it was verified that men's experiences of suffering discrimination in the workplace differed their attitudes. The results showed that men who experienced discrimination rated support of women given by organizations as a greater threat to themselves ($F(1, 378) = 17.28, p < 0.001$) and more negative consequences for women arising from discrimination against men ($F(1, 378) = 4.51, p < 0.05$).

Gender-related diversity management practices carried out by organizations can have a social impact on the position of men and women on the labor market. For instance, this could refer to the image of gender, in the relations between the genders in the workplace, or fairness in career paths. The results showed that the respondents are consistent in terms of the effects of gender-related diversity management on the image of women. Regardless of the country, they tend to believe that diversity management activities do not reinforce the image of women as the 'weak' gender. However, the disparities in their attitudes occur in terms of uncertainty in interactions between employees of different genders as a consequence of diversity management activities. For Germans, the problem does not exist, but Poles are not as sure ($F(1, 379) = 11.60, p < 0.001$). It should be noted that Poles see the threat of women's employment quotas as the main criterion for selecting the candidate instead of qualifications; however, the difference is not statistically significant ($F(1, 379) = 3.08, p = 0.08$).

Conclusions

This chapter contributes to research on the social impacts of organizations. Analyzing the perspective of men, it stresses the need to take into account the expectations of both genders when planning gender-related diversity management in the workplace, in order to create higher value for broader communities and change game rule (not sum-zero game) (Jones et al., 2022).

In general, the results show that men from Generation Y are barely involved in gender-related diversity in the workplace, although this varies according to

the country (Bader et al., 2022). Poles feel more threatened than their German counterparts by activities supporting women, like leadership programs for women, networking, coaching, or mentoring. In addition, men who have experienced discrimination approach practices supporting women with more caution, perceiving them as a greater threat. On the one hand, this tendency may be related to the differences in the Gender Inequality Index. On the other hand, it could be related to the psychological mechanisms underlying the responses toward increasing gender diversity. According to intergroup threat theory (Jones et al., 2022), realistic threats underlie resistance. Poles are more likely to consider gender-related diversity in the workplace as a women-only practice which will reinforce negative defensive responses from men (Flood, 2015), such as negative attitudes toward women's employment quotas. The small group of respondents posed an obstacle for gender diversity management. It calls for further research on the characteristics of that group of men and within-sex differences based on individual gender-related attitudes and beliefs (Martins & Parsons, 2007).

From a theoretical perspective, the findings of the study boost our understanding of the determinants of gender-related diversity management. Previous research was mostly women-oriented (cf. Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015; Dashper, 2019; Yadav & Lenka, 2020). The present results suggest that there are salient needs among men who have been discriminated in the workplace or feel threatened by practices solely oriented at women that should be addressed in diversity management practice. From the practical perspective, HR experts would be well advised to look for ways to make diversity management more attractive to men by communicating the advantages of diversity management and gender equality for them, such as less career pressure or greater freedom of choice, etc. It would also be promising to transfer part of the responsibility for diversity management to male employees. In this way, the chances of success can be increased, as diversity management would be perceived by male employees as a shared, mutual initiative and not as an imposed, forced instrument (Köllen, 2021).

The results of the present research in two different Polish and German markets have some limitations. The findings are subject to representative bias associated with the use of a convenience sample of one generation of male employees. Today, Generation Y is an important component of the workforce; however, the use of a more representative sample in future research, extended to other generations, would help validate the findings. The results that Poles are more threatened than German participants by activities supporting women may be a consequence of the sample used in this study. Future research should focus on an analysis of the male perspective on diversity management from different countries. Moreover, there is a further need to explore the impact of diversity management beyond the organization. The points made here on the theoretical level, regarding the relevance of diversity management in the context of the social impact of organizations, need to be examined empirically.

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