

A Study of Gender based Micro-Aggressions at Workplace

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ABSTRACT

Microaggressions are concealed behaviors in interactions at workplaces. They are observed to happen on a day to day basis. These are hidden and are forms of discriminatory behaviors. Targeted employees feel their energy zapped out and therefore are unable to perform to their utmost. This affects workplace productivity and is unconscious in nature. Women face more gender Microaggressions than men do. Examining gender discrimination in the workplace via the lens of Microaggressions provides a unique opportunity. There is a need to assess a wide spectrum of sexist experiences, from subtle to overt, expanding the scope of most previous frameworks. Racist insults targeted at women resolutely pain the individual. This study addresses the literature gap of lack of research on gender discrimination based on stereotyping in the workplace leading to Microaggressions. Qualitative research methodology is used in this paper.

KEYWORDS

Microaggressions, Gender Stereotyping, Discrimination

INTRODUCTION

The term Microaggressions is subtle and quite complex to determine, there are instances of discrimination, suppression of marginalized group, who face various situations leading to anger and frustrations. Microaggressions, just like any other discrimination form, can be projected to any minority group ex. women, racial minorities and LGBT community (Basford, T. E et al.). Women continuously face the challenges in the past at the workplace, which is disadvantageous to them when compared to males.

Microaggressions are not visible at the disposal, as they are developed with respect to time & are often hidden. However, this does not mean that the feelings that trigger such behaviors at the workplace cease to exist, despite that they are built up in different ways which are more serious in nature.

Factors like orthodox stereotypes, and notions, lack of mentoring, gender biased practices, and networking options, family pressure, funding unavailability act as barriers for today's working women (Bible & Hill, 2007; Evers & Sieverding, In Press). Becker and Swim (2011, p. 227) mentions that it requires the reduction in the sexist beliefs to be able to become more aware of the gender discrimination and then can "see the unseen". The people experiencing Microaggression may need to consider their psychological well-being and other person's willingness to do conversation and the possibility of the latter to remain silent (Nadal, K. L., & Haynes, K.)(2012).

OBJECTIVES

- To investigate the micro aggression classification with respect to the gender inequality at the workplace, further exploring micro aggressions on the basis of gender, with an insight on the unintentional behaviors not including insult, rude behavior etc.
- To comprehend the perspectives and implications of a variety of modern manifestations of gender discrimination.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative content analysis has been used as a methodology here. “Content analysis is a qualitative analysis method that focuses on recorded human artefacts such as manuscripts, journals and web content. Content analysis investigates these written, spoken and visual artefacts without explicitly extracting data from participants – also called as unobtrusive research.”

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender Microaggression

Gender Microaggressions, a form of sexism, is becoming a dominant form of discrimination and biasness, as it is difficult to trace and doesn't have any serious disciplinary actions unlike other forms of discrimination (Basford et al., 2014). When gender Microaggression is recognized, the people who observe generally think the victim to be impacted in a negative sense. Sue and his colleagues (2007, p. 271) stated that Microaggression is “the usual and daily behavior, environmental elements, which are associated with the verbal or physical/semi-physical activities, whether intentional or not, that are prone to be showing the effects in terms of hostility, negative racial feeling and sense of inferiority among people of a certain group”. The witnesses of gender Microaggressions at the workplace had predicted the target to be negatively impacted resulting in lack of satisfaction in the job, demotivated state, the intentions to resign, and even declining job performance. To aid the above mentioned statement, past research has shown that experiences of gender discrimination had directly impacted work-related outcomes, like job fulfillment, organizational commitments and productivity (Foley et al., 2005).

As the research had found that witnessing discrimination based on sexual and ethnic aspects is associated with the negative consequences for both victim as well as the observers (Schneider, & Rounds, 2007). The current research provides the identification of individuals who may potentially be associated with the gendered discrimination resulting in negative effects. Additionally, the gender Microaggression is generally redirected towards females.

Many previous studies focusing on the impact of experiencing Microaggression related to the women as the victims, found that women who experienced Microaggression in some degree reported declining efficiency and organizational commitments. in comparison to the men who are prone to same amount of discrimination (Foley et al., 2005).

In this paper, the most significant factor challenging the working women is being investigated, i.e. gender discrimination at the workplace. Despite the paucity of literature related to the gender based Microaggression, there is strong initial evidence showing a link between the instances of Microaggressions and the psychological problems (Barnes, 2011). Recent studies have expanded their scope from just examining Microaggression based on race, to the psychological and physical impact of Microaggression on the women group (Nadal,

Hamit, Lyons, Weinberg, & Corman, 2013; Nadal & Haynes, 2011). As per Basford et al., (2014) women face gender Microaggressions more than men do, hence this paper is an extension of the above finding. The paper explores the challenges faced by female genders at the workplace. Additionally it comprehends the perspectives and implications of a variety of modern manifestations of gender discrimination.

How important is it to raise awareness of Gender Microaggressions?

There is a broad list of Microaggressions that could occur. Common racial aggressions include white people who perceive themselves as color blind when it is about the issues concerned with race. Many have unintentionally made Microaggressions that have harmed others. Consider whether the assertion is critical before making a comment, especially if it entails contradicting someone. Consider the impact on the individual rather than the goal you want to attain.

It is very significant to make the individuals who trigger the Microaggression as well as the people who face that in order to mitigate or avoid the mental damage to the victim. The communities who are marginalized have been observed to go through increased grief and trauma episodes post such activities at the workplace. If nothing subtle is performed, these communities will continue to face mental harassment and the goal to achieve the racial equality will remain only in the books.

Microaggressions are defined by Sue and his colleagues (2007, p. 271) as general and everyday environment at the workplace which includes the use of verbal and behavior related misconducts, whether done intentionally or not, that creates anxiety, frustration and insults in the subconscious of the people facing it. The studies concerned with the aforementioned aspects had been tested by conducting qualitative study, investigating discrimination based on the races. In her research on gender microaggression, (Sue, 2010) proposes that it can also be applied to other forms of discrimination, such as gender discrimination. Gender discrimination is characterised as "when personnel decisions are made based on an individual's qualifications or job performance rather than on gender, an ascribed attribute" (Foley, Hangyue, & Wong, 2005, p. 423).

According to research, women, when compared to their male counterparts, appear to be more sensitive to racial discrimination in the workplace. (Haslam, & Postmes, 2007). Some authors have methodological approaches about initial studies of Microaggression. They have propounded the relationship of Microaggression with depleting mental health (Lilienfeld, Scott O, 2017). Despite the paucity of research on gender Microaggressions, there is substantial preliminary evidence to show a relationship between Microaggression encounters in general and psychological discomfort (Barnes, 2011; Beaumont, 2010; Blume, Lovato, Thyken, & Denny, 2012). As per (LaCosse, Sekaquaptewa, & Bennett, 2016) stated, women who were treated negatively in the workplace tend to be less productive. The awareness towards Microaggression can be increased by giving opportunities and experiencing the consequences. It may provide internal motivation to avoid stereotyping, and can reduce biases over time (Devine, Forscher, Austin, & Cox, 2012).

The notions of Microaggressions based on the racial ethnicity have been seen to affect the work results in direct proportionality. (Offermann, Basford, De Graaf, Graebner, & Jaffer, 2013). Although the concept of Microaggression is exclusively applied to minor racial and ethnic groups, it is seen to be stretched to any marginalized group irrespective of their nature.

For example, Nadal (e.g. Nadal, 2013 et. al) has led the field in exploration of Microaggressions. When applied to gender, this taxonomy has a lot of potential for examining the wide range of employment discrimination that women face. Examining gender discrimination in the workplace via the lens of Microaggressions provides a unique opportunity. To assess a wide spectrum of sexist experiences, from subtle to overt, expanding the

boundaries of most previous models. As the current gender presentations are so diverse, understanding is extremely valuable. Discrimination at work can take many forms, ranging from overt attacks to subtle and more subtle ways (for example, being left out of important conversations; Suskind, 2011). Some people may be motivated by prejudice to deny the continued obstacles faced by working women, then you're putting yourself at risk causing women to believe their problems are unimportant. Discrimination can sometimes take the form of the insults which are not sensitive in nature target women who are working and sometimes can be straight minor assaults.

Scholars have lately begun to investigate the impact of Microaggressions directed at women, expanding study on the topic beyond the domain of race (Nadal, Hamit, Lyons, Weinberg, & Corman, 2013; Nadal & Haynes, 2011). Gender discrimination in the workplace today manifests itself in a variety of ways, ranging from noticeable targeting to more serious forms (e.g., not including the individual in significant discussion as per (Suskind, 2011). This study addresses the literature gap of lack of research on gender stereotyping in the workplace leading to Microaggressions.

Measures taken by Global Companies to curb Microaggression at workplace *Accenture Launches*

Women Founders Program in India

The giant firm Accenture has introduced the Women Founders Program to help the early-stage startups which are founded by women majorly in the Business-to-Business core technology, and enterprises focussed on the Software as a Service(SaaS) to grow their organizations. It will also choose a few entrepreneurs in the technology domain to grant them up to US\$ 60,000(equity-free), including the access to the market & networks.

Accenture has created the Women Founders Program(WFP) in India to assist early stage, female-led B2B deep tech and corporate SaaS firms in growing and advancing their businesses. Accenture will award chosen Indian technology entrepreneurs with an equity-free grant of up to USD \$60,000, as well as market and network access and mentoring, as part of this initiative. The Women Founders Program is open to early-stage B2B technology companies with at least one female founder and a focus on advanced technologies such artificial intelligence, the internet of things, cloud, blockchain, Web 3.0, metaverse, big data and analytics, and extended reality.

The WFP will be inviting the early-stage companies dealing in B2B space, and they should have at least one female founder, on the top of it, they should be focussing upon advanced technologies like Web 3.0, AI, Machine learning, cloud technology, To be eligible for the programme, the startups must be located in India and must be in a working stage(prototyped) and should be early adopters. Shortlisted startups will be chosen by Accenture along with the leadership team of the ecosystem based on product uniqueness, disruption ability quotient, deep technology leveraging, commercial feasibility, and founder profile.

IBM: #EachforEqual: Advancing gender equality in business & technology

People, globally commemorate International Women's Day on March 08th, which is a huge event of women's social, economic, cultural, and political accomplishments as well as a

reminder to keep the fight for gender equality alive. Although many firms have focussed upon setting up the diversity & inclusion in the workforce, there has been an increased coverage over the lack of women in the leadership positions, and roles focussed on core technologies, both of which are quite significant to IBM's system.

According to Catalyst's data on women in management, women held 29 percent of senior management posts globally in 2019. This number has been rising, but it by no means reflects equal involvement of men and women. In the world of technology, gender representation is a little more bleak. According to McKinsey & Company's recent technology sector analysis, Women are still a minority in terms of numbers, in computer science at each level, either it is K-12 through higher education and also in the workforce. They constitute upto 26% of the total computing workforce, while a meager 11% of the senior leadership roles, the women of color are in significantly low numbers in both.

We know that achieving gender equality will take more than a few leaders speaking up; it will need everyone pledging to question biases, call out biased assumptions, and increase women's visibility. A promise to give direction and promotion to the women, provide them with the best possible academic tools, and professional help to not only include them in the workforce but take them to the leadership positions. The women in IT face discomfort at the workplace, along with the Microaggression at the workplace which originates from their home in one or the other form in many of the cases through their childhood carried to the workforce.

CONCLUSION

A large number of women experience gender discrimination in the form of Microaggression at workplace. On account of this they are largely dissatisfied and also feel unsafe at work. It is also observed that, they land up in depression, have anxiety attacks and resort to alcohol and substance use. The feeling of being undervalued can cause women to lose their self confidence.

Responding to Microaggression is a way of communicating displeasure to the community which targets them. It also brings to attention the wrong behavior meted out to women at the workplace. Microaggressions has detrimental consequences not only to the targeted women, but also to the productivity of the workplace. Educating the perpetrators, leveraging support groups and coming out in the open about these behaviors could be a key step in controlling Microaggression.

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