The Evolution of LGBTQIA+ Personnel in the American Workplace

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This paper highlights the organizational diversity challenges current firms and institutions face, such as LGBTQIA+ personnel in the workforce. Therefore, this research aims to provide recommendations for effectively using communication and mentoring skills in a diverse workplace. As a result, organizations should utilize the best practices to establish an inclusive and diverse workforce. The implications of the findings emphasize a literature gap on how corporations can create an inclusive workplace for all employees, regardless of their sexual orientation. Importantly, the significance of the results will raise further questions about the notion of marginalized employees in work settings. Overall, the research on the LGBTQIA+ community in work environments is notable and must be studied to spread awareness of the value that these personnel bring in the workplace.

Keywords: LGBTQIA+ employees, inclusion, diversity, discrimination, harassment

INTRODUCTION

The acronym LGBTQIA+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning or Queer, Intersex, and Asexual. This community has been more "open" for several decades, with members worldwide, hoping for acceptance and inclusion. **Nadal's 2023 book, entitled "*Dismantling Everyday Discrimination*" examines the microaggressions that people in the gay and lesbian community face on a regular basis, highlights their impact on the worker's mental health, and discusses ways professionals can assist in properly addressing microaggressions.** Compared to assaults and hate crimes, Nadal emphasizes that microaggressions are typically more covert or innocuous in nature. In some cases, microaggressions are intentional while at times they are unintentional. Luckily, there has been a cultural shift towards the acceptance of LGBTQ people in some parts of the world, such as the United States, Canada, as well as parts of Europe and Asia. Yet many governments have also passed laws that attack and discriminate against the gay and lesbian community members. As such, institutional and interpersonal discrimination continues to occur in the lives of LGBTQ people throughout the United States of America (Nadal, 2023).

One of the main issues in this gay and lesbian community is the organizational discrimination challenges LGBTQIA+ employees face in a modern firm or institution. Specifically, there are multiple forms of LGBTQIA+ harassment and discrimination present in the workplace. For example, heterosexism "refers to the belief that heterosexuality is the norm" (Mujtaba, 2022, p. 65). In other words, homosexuality

and other sexualities are not as widely accepted as heterosexuality in the present working environments. In addition, homophobia "is the fear of homosexuality or those who belong to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning (LGBTQ) community" (Mujtaba, 2022, p. 65). Altogether, both ideologies exhibit discriminatory and exclusionary behaviors, isolating LGBTQIA+ working personnel. Therefore, it is essential to address these obstacles because discrimination and harassment based on an individual's sexual orientation are unethical and often illegal in the United States of America. This prominent challenge encourages organizations to address the topic to create a productive and competitively diverse workplace.

This topic is a challenge for organizations that can obstruct the full participation of diverse employees in various matters. First, "LGBTQIA+ employees comprise a significant portion of the workforce; it is estimated that approximately 8 million people, or 3.5% of the U.S. population, identify as LGBTQIA+" (Webster et al., 2018, p. 196). However, the statistics are estimates because employees conceal their sexual orientations due to fear of stigmatization, discrimination, and harassment. As a result, this issue negatively impacts the full participation of diverse employees as it provides inaccurate company descriptions and employment staff information. In addition, LGBTQIA+ employees intentionally providing erroneous information about themselves to a company or organization can result in legal trouble, negatively impacting their career and employment stability. Overall, companies must address this challenge adequately as it affects the active engagement of its diverse employees, leading to an unprofessional workplace.

Second, LGBTQIA+ employees are at greater risk of experiencing unequal management, violent hate crimes, and systematic oppression. For example, "in the National Transgender Discrimination Survey, approximately 78% of transgender employees reported being harassed or mistreated at work, and 47% reported being discriminated against in terms of hiring, promotion, or job retention" (Webster et al., 2018, p. 196). Table 1 shows the prevalence of transgender adults that report discrimination incidents (Casey et al., 2019, p. 1463). LGBTQIA+ employees are more likely to experience opposing work-related challenges, obstructing their involvement in the firm or institution. As a result, these challenges for organizations emphasize the absence of sufficient and specific federal laws and regulations regarding protecting the LGBTQIA+ community. Therefore, the lack of clear legislation makes the employees more vulnerable and susceptible to work discrimination and harassment. Overall, federal and workforce organizations must work together to ensure the protection and safety of all employees, especially LGBTQIA+ personnel in employed environments.

TABLE 1
TRANSGENDER ADULTS DISCRIMINATION

	Subject of discrimination[b]	N Weighted percent of transgender adults[c]
Belief in overall discrimination		
General belief that discrimination against transgender people exists today in the United States[d]	All transgender adults (total sample)	8684
Personal experiences of institutional discrimination		
Health care		
Going to a doctor or health clinic	You (half☐sample B)	5510
Personal experiences of interpersonal discrimination		
Microaggressions[e]	You (half☐sample B)	5528
Slurs[e]	You (half☐sample B)	5538
People acted afraid[e]	You (half☐sample B)	5518
Been told or felt unwelcome because of being transgender[f]	You or LGBTQ friend/family member (total sample)	8622
Actions based on concerns about discrimination		
Avoided doctor or health care because of concerns of discrimination/poor treatment	You or LGBTQ family member (half☐sample B)	5522
Thought about moving to another area because of personally experienced discrimination[g]	You (total sample)	8627

(Casey et al., 2019, p. 1463)

a. Transgender adults include transgender, genderqueer, and gender nonconforming adults aged 18+. Most individual questions only asked among a randomized subsample of half of respondents. Don't know/refused responses included in the total for unadjusted estimates.

b. Questions about you are personal experiences only; questions about you or LGBTQ friend/family member ask if items have happened to you or a friend/family member because you or they are part of the LGBTQ community.

c. Percent calculated using survey weights.

d. Question asked as "Generally speaking, do you believe there is or is not discrimination against transgender people in America today?"

e. Question wording: "In your day-to-day life, have any of the following things ever happened to you, or not?" and respondent indicated they had experienced this *and* believed this happened because your sexual orientation or gender identity. Slurs = someone referred to you or a group you belong to using a slur or other negative word; Microaggressions = someone made negative assumptions or insensitive or offensive comments about you; People acted afraid = people acted as if they were afraid of you.

f. You or a friend/family member who is also part of the LGBTQ community has been told or felt you would be unwelcome in a neighborhood, building, or housing development you were interested in because you are part of the LGBTQ community.

g. You have thought about moving to another area because you have experienced discrimination or unequal treatment where you were living.

Third, LGBTQIA+ employees do not have an influential voice and opinion nearly as much as their heterosexual counterparts resulting in an unequal distribution of representation in the workplace. For example, "in the United Kingdom (UK), trans individuals are rarely mentioned in organizations' diversity policies or statements" (Beauregard et al., 2018, pp. 857-858). These inaccurate portrayals of LGBTQIA+ orientations significantly impact the company's diversity regulations allowing others to assume an improper and biased perspective about the workforce conditions. In addition, this challenge exhibits that the invisibility of transgender representation within the employee staff could potentially spread to other sexual orientation descriptions and marginalized groups, including women and minorities, negatively impacting the whole company. The concealing of the LGBTQIA+ community will lead to inaudibility and a lack of diverse perspectives. Overall, the lack of voice of LGBTQIA+ working personnel will translate into a lack of power in the organization. Lack of power often means that discrimination and aggression can continue at times, and, therefore, organizations must proactively intervene to prevent costly lawsuits and unfair treatment of their minority employees. Minorities face various forms of aggression against them due to prejudices and stereotypes because they are different from the majority (Lopez, Marquez, Martinez, Marretta, Briana, Lozovnoy, and Mujtaba, 2022; Cooper and Mujtaba, 2022; Cavico and Mujtaba, 2017; Cavico and Mujtaba, 2016; Cavico and Mujtaba, and Samuel, 2016; Dobrich, Dranoff & Maatman, 2002). Microaggressions take place in the form of everyday discrimination. Nadal (2023) states that Microaggressions are subtle and can even be well-intentioned in some cases. Microaggressions are typically experienced by people of color, LGBTQ community, women, religious minorities, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups. "Research has found that microaggressions can occur in various settings (e.g., schools, workplaces, families) and have a detrimental impact on people who experience them, including mental health issues, difficulties in coming-out processes, or the development of trauma symptoms" (Nadal, 2023, p. 5). There are many forms of microaggressions and three are emphasized by recent experts.

The first type, microassaults, are defined as the use of explicit derogations either verbally or nonverbally, as demonstrated through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or discriminatory actions toward the intended victim (e.g., making a derogatory joke about Asian Americans or telling a Latinx person to "go back where you came from"). While such language can be interpreted as hostile and derogatory by the many people who hear it, people who engage in such behavior may rationalize their actions as being jokes or justified political opinions that are not reflective of any racial biases.

The second type of microaggression, microinsults, are often unconscious and are described as verbal or nonverbal communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's heritage or identity. For instance, when a person with a disability is spoken to patronizingly, or when a woman is told she is not capable of something, a subtle message is sent that these individuals are inferior to the dominant group (i.e., able-bodied people or men). Although the perpetrator did not explicitly say derogatory words, the target may experience such comments as degrading, and although the perpetrator may not have intended any offense, they target may react negatively.

The last type of microaggressions, called microinvalidations, are also often unconscious and include communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the realities of individuals of oppressed groups. Examples include a white American professor telling a student of color that they complain about racism too much or a white male colleague telling a woman of color colleague that she is angry or hostile. Such messages, although seemingly innocuous, indirectly invalidate the racial or gendered realities that a person faces on a regular basis (Nadal, 2023, p. 6).

The microinvalidations, also known as gaslighting, takes place when a "person from the historically dominant group attempts to convince the person from the historically marginalized group that they are psychologically inept and have a distorted sense of reality" (Nadal, 2003, p. 7). Since workers are becoming more diverse and companies often aim to provide them a healthy and inclusive work environment to attract and retain top talent (Mujtaba and Meyer, 2022), it is important to delve into the diversity literature, challenges, and best practice for removing obstacles facing the LGBTQIA+ community.

DIVERSITY LITERATURE

The article discusses challenges facing the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT, aka LGBTQIA+) community in the workplace over the years. In addition, the report also provides information on how companies and organizations can support this community. In recent years, there has been a push to have equal rights for the LGBTQIA+ community in the workplace. However, the determination to protect gay marriage by federal law of the Supreme Court and the protection of LGBTQIA+ in the workplace is on a state-by-state level by employers in the U.S. (Zugelder & Champagne, 2018). In other words, the dilemma is apparent for employees and a challenge for workforce managers. Overall, as can be seen from this recent diversity challenge that remains prominent in working environments and the discrimination charges in Table 2, more intervention from the government and private sector leaders are needed to protect the community.

TABLE 2
LGBTQ+-BASED SEX DISCRIMINATION CHARGES

	FY 2013*	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
Receipts	808	1,100	1,412	1,768	1,762	1,811	1,868	1,857	1,968
Resolutions	337	846	1,135	1,649	2,016	2,101	2,013	1,953	1,896
Resolutions By Type									
Settlements	31	71	96	118	147	165	157	186	231
	9.2%	8.4%	8.5%	7.2%	7.3%	7.9%	7.8%	9.5%	12.2%
Withdrawals w/Benefits	17	46	57	74	106	111	125	100	130
	5.0%	5.4%	5.0%	4.5%	5.3%	5.3%	6.2%	5.1%	6.9%
Administrative Closures	69	164	203	282	304	287	336	341	357
	20.5%	19.4%	17.9%	17.1%	15.1%	13.7%	16.7%	17.5%	18.8%
No Reasonable Cause	216	544	737	1,114	1,373	1,462	1,352	1,287	1,133
	64.1%	64.3%	64.9%	67.6%	68.1%	69.6%	67.2%	65.9%	59.8%

Reasonable Cause	4	21	42	61	86	76	43	39	45
	1.2%	2.5%	3.7%	3.7%	4.3%	3.6%	2.1%	2.0%	2.4%
Successful Conciliations	1	13	13	26	24	30	16	17	15
	0.3%	1.5%	1.1%	1.6%	1.2%	1.4%	0.8%	0.9%	0.8%
Unsuccessful Conciliations	3	8	29	35	62	46	27	22	30
	0.9%	0.9%	2.6%	2.1%	3.1%	2.2%	1.3%	1.1%	1.6%
Merit Resolutions	52	138	195	253	339	352	325	325	406
	15.4%	16.3%	17.2%	15.3%	16.8%	16.8%	16.1%	16.6%	21.4%
Monetary Benefits (Millions)	$0.9	$2.2	$3.3	$4.4	$5.3	$6.1	$7.0	$6.0	$9.2

(EEOC data: https://www.eeoc.gov/data/lgbtq-based-sex-discrimination-charges)
*The data for FY 2013 is for the last three quarters only. EEOC began tracking information on charges filed alleging discrimination related to gender identity and/or sexual orientation for charges received on or after January 1, 2013.
Note: Charges may have multiple allegations under multiple statutes, so totals will not tally with breakdowns of specific bases or issues and are subject to updates. Monetary benefits include amounts which have been recovered exclusively or partially on non-LGBT claims included in the charge.

In the past, there has been some support and protection for the LGBTQIA+ community. For example, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) can address allegations based on discrimination on the identity and orientations of individuals and the protection for the LGBTQIA+ community in existing executive orders by former presidents Clinton and Johnson (Zugelder & Champagne, 2018). On the other hand, efforts were made to disband protection for the LGBTQIA+ community in companies and organizations. These efforts were present under the Trump Administration. When the former president Donald Trump took office, within the first few months, his administration reversed protection laws for the LGBTQIA+ community. The action was in the following executive orders: The presidential Executive Order Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty and The Revocation of Federal Contracting Executive Orders (Zugelder & Champagne, 2018). Overall, changing orders at the federal level is a regression in the equality of the LGBTQIA+ community in the workforce.

Civil Rights
It is vital to mention that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 forbids discrimination of race, sex, and skin color (Zugelder & Champagne, 2018). Shortly after the Civil Rights act, the primary goal of passing additional orders was to protect the public. For example, the order includes protection against discrimination against individuals who are pregnant, of old age, and those with disabilities. Surprisingly, there is no specific laws regarding protecting individuals who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community in the workforce. Not to mention, Congress declines yearly proposals regarding LGBTQIA+ as part of the Civil Right Act. However, the good news is that in a historic decision on June 20 of 2020, SCOTUS (the Supreme Court of the U.S.) ruled that the existing 1964 Civil Rights Act does and should continue to protect gays, lesbian, and transgender employees from workplace discrimination based on sex. This was a monumental win for the LGBTQIA+ community. Overall, the advocacy for protection and equality for this community is not comparable to other communities in the workplace.

Advocating accommodations has been present within the past decade for transgender employees in the workforce. For example, in 2011, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) provided suggestions to federal employers about having transgender individuals in their workplace. These suggestions included allowing transgender individuals to dress and wear clothes that they identify with, to use correct pronouns that the individual identifies themselves as, to be given appropriate work duties for the identified gender, and to be allowed access to bathrooms and locker rooms to identified gender (Zugelder & Champagne, 2018). On the other hand, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulates employers that are not federal and considered private. Therefore, OSHA states it is up to the private employers to

provide their employees with secure, sterile restrooms and arrangements for transgender individuals (Zugelder & Champagne, 2018). Overall, there has previously been a push for LGBTQIA+ equality at a federal and private level in the work environment to appropriately address their orientation and identity.

Management and Inclusion

Individuals who are in managerial positions can help support the LGBTQIA+ community to create an inclusive work environment. Of course, employers with LGBTQIA+ employees must remain open and malleable with the changes made from political/legal, and social standpoints. However, some benefits have been for employers and companies that respect their employees' identified gender and orientation, as identified by the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD). The benefits include a more significant public standing and decreased chances of receiving discrimination lawsuits. There are also recommendations such as companies and organizations remaining updated with terminology regarding orientation and identity. Equally important, training on orientation and identity should be given to individuals in companies, such as supervisors, to become more aware of discrimination and to spot certain behaviors in the work environment that might be problematic. Overall, it is essential to establish a respectable work environment for all individuals regardless of differences so that managers can ensure their employees properly do the job without discrimination or harassment. There are various ways in which companies, organizations, and those in high positions, such as a manager, can support and provide security for their LGBTQIA+ employees. Therefore, it is critical that individuals in high positions at companies and organizations set the standard and ensure that all their employees feel safe, comfortable, and respected at work.

Evolving Demographics

Let us investigate the evolving demographic of LGBTQIA+ representation within organizations. To begin with, "in the world, around 27 million LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) is present, and around 8 million are in the US, and 3.5 million are in Australia" (Singh, 2018, p. 22). As the population continues to grow, it is critical for the workplace to display and practice support for all its employees. However, LGBTQIA+ employees face continuous forms of harassment and discrimination daily. For example, "transgender individuals undergo severe discrimination at the workplace, across the world; the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2013 mentioned the discrimination of transgender" (Singh, 2018, p. 23). There is a significant literature and diversity gap, ultimately devaluing research about transgender individuals. Additionally, LGBTQIA+ diversity management and representation is disproportionate to other marginalized groups, including women and minorities. If the underrepresentation of this community continues, it will lead to an unequal and insufficient diversified workplace.

On the other hand, the investigation provides evidence of the positive effects of LGBTQIA+ diversity and inclusion in the workplace on the employees. For example, "sexual orientation diversity and favorable policies tend to help LGBT employees to express their talent openly, and they outperformed their peers" (Singh, 2018, p. 23). In other words, these policies promote safety and protection for employees to openly communicate their sexual orientations without the fear or anxiety of stigmatization. Therefore, the regulations shall establish a positive and safe diverse environment promoting productivity in the workplace. Another area is the positive impact of policies supporting LGBTQIA+, such as enhancing work ethic and creating an inclusive workplace. In addition, these policies improve employee working abilities and capitalize on the unique qualities of everyone. Overall, LGBTQIA+ diversity and inclusion shall continue to evolve within the workplace.

Furthermore, research should highlight the influence of the employee system and affinity networks as an outlet for LGBTQIA+ employees. Therefore, the main goal of this investigation is to advocate for LGBTQIA+ voices in the workplace. To begin with, "organizations that are heteronormatively centric, where *heteronormativity* is a force that '[ascribes] heterosexuality a normative and privileged status by reinforcing a heterosexual/ homosexual binary" (McFadden & Crowley-Henry, 2018, p. 1057). In other words, heteronormative working environments challenge LGBTQIA+ employees within identity management as they feel forced to conform to heteronormative workplace-centric ideals. As a result, these

individuals will feel emotionally and psychologically distant from their true sexual identity, leading to loneliness within the organization. In addition, this basic concept of LGBTQIA+ employees feeling alienated describes workplace exclusivity as it negatively affects the individual's physical health and well-being. Overall, it is critical to acknowledge heteronormativity and workplace exclusivity, as LGBTQIA+ employees are more susceptible to the consequences.

On the other hand, employee systems and LGBTQIA+ networks provide a voicing platform for the employees, reducing the community's stigmatization. For example, "employee voice mechanisms – such as LGBT employee networks – enable (minority) employees to participate in and influence organizational decision-making" (McFadden & Crowley-Henry, 2018, p. 1061). Employee voice mechanisms allow marginalized groups, such as the LGBTQIA+ community, to have a powerful platform and an influential say in the company's work decisions. Also, LGBTQIA+ employee networks are essential for promoting inclusivity and decreasing isolation within the workforce. An extension of LGBTQIA+ employee networks would be utilizing a group voice as it protects and anonymizes the employees' notoriety. In addition, this strategy allows the staff to be discreet and feel heard without unnecessary or unwanted attention. Overall, employee voice mechanisms and LGBTQIA+ networks are promising workforce strategies, advocating for an impactful voice platform.

Lastly, researchers must consider possibilities to refine the recruitment and retention processes for LGBTQIA+ employees within American progressive education organizations. To begin with, "organizations may purport to understand the LGBT population, but the difficulty of identifying the population and deep-seated feelings of immorality toward the population may cause underrepresentation" (Shrader, 2016, p. 184). So, creating LGBTQIA+ policies are gradually at the state and federal levels, leading to insufficient LGBTQIA+ protection. The lack of federal and state protection will continue to slow the creation of inclusive regulations. On the other hand, the creation of refining the recruitment and retention processes for LGBTQIA+ employees within American organizations of advanced education are steadily inclining, displaying positive effects on the working personnel. For example, "domestic partner benefits appear to positively affect recruitment and retention, but they are used as part of an overall benefits package" (Shrader, 2016, p. 201). The benefits include economic and equity advantages like their heterosexual colleagues. As a result, the benefits provide an influential network for LGBTQIA+ to voice their opinions and feel heard by the organization. Overall, programs providing good benefits for the LGBTQIA+ community serve as notable strategies for institutions to refine the recruitment and retention processes within educational organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A recommendation to support the LGBTQIA+ community in any work environment is to offer a support group for these individuals. A support group can allow individuals who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community to feel safe and connected in their work environment. For example, in the support group, the members can talk about their experiences, relate to one another, and give solutions and ideas to address issues that a member or a few members might be experiencing. Another is providing a safe option for the LGBTQIA+ community to have a say in their experience in the workplace. This option will allow LGBTQIA+ individuals to be heard and respected in the work environment. An implementation and mentoring plan can be inclusive of such tasks as the following:
- Hire qualified individuals with the skill set to provide these services for a support group. For example, an occupational therapist has the skill set to run groups for any population.
- Have an anonymous box where LGBTQIA+ individuals can write and express their experiences and concerns. Then, once a month, the manager of the company/organization can read what individuals put in the box and decide to address it in a staff meeting and support group.

Modern additional practices for effectively using communication and mentoring skills in such a diverse workplace exist. For example, firms can exhibit LGBTQIA+ employee-related mechanisms. Therefore, the primary goal would be to discuss the influence of Employee-Resource Groups (ERGs) and allies within the

workplace. First, employee voice is "a complex and uneven set of meanings and purposes with a dialectic shaped by external regulations, on the one hand, and internal management choice, on the other" (McNulty et al., 2018, p. 829). In other words, employee voice is complex as it consists of various perspectives and different forms of communication. Specifically, the LGBTQIA+ voice is complicated across multiple workforce platforms as mainly heterosexual ethnic-majority males dominate the environment. As a result, discrimination and stigmatization are prominent as both negatively affect communication among LGBTQIA+ and their heteronormative counterparts. Overall, employee voice in marginalized groups is essential for creating a diverse workplace.

There is substantial evidence of ERGs providing good practices for practical communication skills and promoting a diverse workplace. For example, the ERG "*fora* and its ally network helped LGBT employees rationalize and digest perceptions of potential harm through the opportunity to access information about host country environments, to learn and disseminate experiences of cultural diversity" (McNulty et al., 2018, p. 846). These groups provide the employees with essential knowledge about the active community allowing them to make rational decisions about experiencing potential distress and spread diverse cultural experiences. As a result, this practice serves as a foundation for LGBTQIA+ employees to communicate their concerns and rationales effectively without the fear of being unsafe or retaliation. ERGs serve as a quality practice for effectively using communication techniques to establish a diverse workforce.

In addition, allies are "members of a 'dominant or majority group who works to end oppression in his or her personal and professional life through the support of, and as an advocate for, the oppressed population" (McNulty et al., 2018, p. 832). Therefore, one of the main priorities for allies is to advocate and work toward changing LGBTQIA+-related issues within the workforce. As a result, allies serve as an inclusive, safe, and fair network within the workforce for the LGBTQIA+ employees, thereby promoting equality amongst all. In addition, allies effectively communicate by encouraging advocacy, supporting LGBTQIA+ employees, and diminishing inappropriate behaviors. Furthermore, the ally network for the LGBTQIA+ community shall encourage the creation of future ally systems for other underrepresented groups furthering the discussion of equity and equality. To establish an inclusive workplace, the members must practice voicing support and productively communicating with their employees across all professional levels.

Several important practices either positively or negatively contribute to effectively using communication skills in a diverse workplace. First, "stereotype threat diminished individuals' perceptions of their abilities, lowered their self-esteem, and fostered negative emotions, such as frustration and embarrassment" (Kim et al., 2019, p. 83). As a result, harmful threats indicated poor employee communication due to fear and anxiety. Second, harassment and discrimination can lead to other negative matters, including fatigue, status loss, negative emotions, and avoidance of goal orientation. All stated factors can negatively affect communication and mentoring, especially in marginalized groups. Overall, organizations must provide effective practices for communication to manage diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

On the other hand, there are helpful strategies for organizations to establish communication skills in such a working environment. For example, "implementation intentions are if-then plans that link a critical cue and a goal-directed behavior" (Kim et al., 2019, p. 86). If an employee feels frustrated within the work environment, one can engage in this practice by utilizing their emotions as a signal for engaging in an objective, goal-directed response. So instead of the negative emotions controlling the employee, the employee can effectively control the feeling and clearly communicate their needs. In other words, this practice significantly reduces negative emotions, diminishing the chance of harmful and uncontrolled communication among colleagues. Overall, implementation intentions are effective and positively enhance communication skills, thus creating an inclusively diverse workspace.

There is indisputable evidence suggesting how employees building relationships with LGBTQIA+ leaders can lead to a sense of trust and enhance successful communication within the workplace. Nevertheless, LGBTQIA+ employees and leaders are targets of negative attitudes toward homosexuality. For example, "cisnormativity describes a normative regime in which it is "normal" for individuals to be cisgender, whose personal gender identity is the same as the sex category they were assigned at birth" (Ng

& Rumens, 2017, p. 111). This regime excludes LGBTQIA+ individuals from their counterparts and forces the need to conform to heteronormative societal expectations to feel included within the workplace. In addition, the LGBTQIA+ community is more susceptible to experiencing other regimes, including new forms of harassment such as microaggressions and ostracism. Cisnormativity and harassment forms promote an exclusive workplace, adhering to effective employee communication.

Building trustworthy relationships with LGBTQIA+ leaders can promote successful communication and mentoring styles within the workplace. For example, "LGBT leaders can develop trust with their followers by taking steps to disclose their sexual orientation rather than allow their followers to discover this themselves or through other sources" (Ng & Rumens, 2017, p. 119). As a result, this allows the leaders to establish significant employee satisfaction and decrease harmful mechanisms. In addition, these leaders coming out to their working personnel promotes a sense of inclusivity as they feel comfortable disclosing personal information and bringing the workforce together. Finally, this practice promotes effective communication between employees and leaders, improving mentoring abilities. Altogether, leaders and employees must engage in communication practices that will lead to a professionally diverse organization.

Another practice for effectively using communication skills in such a diverse workplace would be for organizations and institutions to establish LGBTQIA+ workshops within their management. For example, the company could establish informational sessions regarding how employees can become allies with their LGBTQIA+ counterparts. One way an individual can be an ally is to properly inform oneself about the marginalized groups within their environment, such as the LGBTQIA+ community. Another way would be to support and advocate for the rights of all working individuals, especially LGBTQIA+ employees, as they continuously face oppression within the workforce. In addition, employees will learn how to efficiently detect specific forms of discrimination and stereotypes targeting this community and its members. As a result, these workshops shall encourage alliances among all employees and enhance colleague relationships with a strong communication foundation. This practice productively uses communication skills to build ally networks developing a diverse workplace.

A practice for effectively using communication skills in such a diverse workplace would be for organizations and institutions to uphold informational seminars regarding LGBTQIA+ employees. These discussions will consist of proper education about the community, such as the acronym meaning or even providing a checklist to annually audit complaints to make sure they are brought to a successful resolution (Mujtaba and Meyer, 2022). For example, the plus sign in the acronym accounts for other sexual orientations and identities. These orientations include pansexual, omnisexual, and demisexual. Another example would be to educate about the various sexual orientations and their meanings. In addition, employees will learn about the variety of pronouns and the correct usage of each one. For instance, it is essential to understand the difference and when to utilize each pronoun, as incorrect usage could lead to workplace exclusivity. As a result, the sessions shall encourage further communication between LGBTQIA+ employees and their heteronormative counterparts about proper sexual orientation and correct pronoun identification. This practice shall substantially strengthen communication skills by educating working individuals about the LGBTQIA+ community and promoting factual discussions leading to an inclusive workforce.

Significant evidence exhibits nonclinical practices about LGBTQIA+ inclusivity in a diverse workplace. For example, "interpersonal quality includes using inclusive and accurate pronouns and terminology and asking the right questions" (Hudson & Bruce-Miller, 2022, p. 8). One way to execute this practice would be for managers to take considerable time to understand their employees, especially about their proper sexual orientation and pronoun usage. As a result, the interaction shall communicate respect and safety in the working environment. In addition, another practice would be to "display visual cues in the working environment for LGBTQIA+ individuals" (Hudson & Bruce-Miller, 2022, p. 9). One way to execute this practice would be to exhibit LGBTQIA+-specific resources, including informational bulletins and educational material. As a result, this practice shall encourage staff employees to ask questions, especially to their LGBTQIA+ counterparts, about the community establishing informational communication and enhancing their skills. Overall, it is critical to value the physical and mental well-being

of LGBTQIA+ employees by implementing practices to encourage effective communication resulting in an inclusively diverse workplace.

As the workplace changes continuously, the practices regarding LGBTQIA+ care advance in working environments. For example, one practice is to "ask open-ended questions and reflect on the individual's language" (Jones-Schenk, 2018, p. 151). As a result, this practice encourages adequate employee communication about the LGBTQIA+ community and promotes empathetic listening within the workforce. In addition, "to remain inclusive, the National Institute of Health (NIH) has opted to use the term sexual and gender minority" (Jones-Schenk, 2018, p. 153). In other words, this specific term serves as a solution to adequately identifying the LGBTQIA+ community and its members in professional settings. These practices enhance communication and listening skills by fostering empathy toward LGBTQIA+ employees progressing toward a diverse workspace.

Lastly, there are modern practices for effectively using communication skills and fostering LGBTQIA+ cultural competence in such a diverse workplace. For example, cultural competence regarding sexual and gender minority groups involves "awareness of one's own beliefs, biases, and attitudes regarding LGBT populations and skills and tools to provide culturally sensitive interventions for LGBT populations" (Boroughs et al., 2015, p. 9). First, it is critical to be open-minded and consciously aware of one's beliefs towards the LGBTQIA+ community as the population will grow in the future workforce. Second, culturally sensitive LGBTQIA+ interventions must incorporate appropriate information and adequately train individuals to apply the learned knowledge to the authentic working environment. For example, an employer must be open and accepting of the various backgrounds of working employees regarding their sexual orientations, identities, and pronoun usage. The employer should recognize how their views regarding this community could impact the employee's feelings and ensure that it does not disrupt the working individual, especially in a harmful manner. Also, employers and managers should enroll in LGBTQIA+ training to sufficiently inform themselves about the community and practice applying the knowledge with their employees and colleagues, thereby significantly enhancing their mentoring skills. These practices facilitate LGBTQIA+ cultural competence resulting in open communication and advanced mentoring skills in a diverse workplace.

SUMMARY

Workplace discrimination against the LGBTQIA+ community happens regularly in the U.S., and the varying laws between states make this more complicated to address. Moreover, protecting the LGBTQIA+ community has been up to each company, and how organizations should react and support this community is also a challenge. Even though companies and organizations may attempt to support this community by educating employees within their sector, it is critical to continue to do more and be proactive. Examples include campaigning for equal rights, respecting workplace differences, and how individuals define their gender as part of the policy against anti-discrimination (Zugelder & Champagne, 2018). In addition, organizations and managers can better utilize their diverse employees' views and creativity by creating an open environment welcoming different perspectives. Therefore, diversification shall enhance the company morale and encourage other workplaces to further strengthen workers' creative viewpoints. Altogether, it is essential to acknowledge this recent diversity challenge and create an optimal organizational environment that strengthens creativity in the workplace.

Altogether, LGBTQIA+ personnel are significant contributors to the workforce and the national economy. However, these employees face various challenges, negatively affecting the organization and obstructing the full participation of diverse employees. The challenges are harassment, discrimination, and stigmatization resulting in inaccurate sexual orientation company statistics. In addition, other deviances this community suffers from include unequal management, few federal protection laws, and underrepresentation. On the other hand, there is research regarding the positives of LGBTQIA+ diversity and inclusion in the workplace. For instance, the evolution of LGBTQIA+ representation promotes creativity, provides the community with a voicing platform, and programs supporting these employees refine the institutions' recruitment and retention process.

Nevertheless, we provided multiple recommendations for effective communication in a diverse workforce. For example, the best practices include support groups, an anonymous concerns box expressing experiences, Employee-Resource Groups, and workforce allies. Furthermore, other strategies would be the encouragement of positive attitudes, implementation intentions, and relationship building. Lastly, effective practices include LGBTQIA+ workshops, educational seminars, developing interpersonal qualities, displaying visual cues in the working environment, asking open-ended questions, reflecting on LGBTQIA+ employee feedback, promoting inclusivity, and achieving cultural competence in the workforce. Overall, LGBTQIA+ employees will be a continuous challenge as their numbers are growing due to more openness and security of the laws, and organizations shall proactively establish effective practices for promoting quality communication to create an inclusive workplace.

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