

# Personality Traits, Beliefs, Race or Ethnicity, Language, and Religion as Contributors to Job Discrimination Towards Meranaw Job Applicants

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## ABSTRACT

In a highly competitive environment where job-seekers are vying against a pool of equally competent job applicants, the challenge to provide equal employment opportunity against ethnic and racial biases still overshadows the employers' principle of "merit and fitness." This study focused on the mechanisms of culture such as personality traits, beliefs, race or ethnicity, language, and religion that link to job discrimination among Meranaw job applicants and its implication to personnel management. It attempted to find out the correlation between the profile of the said minorities and the mechanisms of culture that link

to job discrimination among them. In this study, the descriptive correlational design was utilized, and a survey was conducted to eighty-seven (87) respondents through the distribution of a researcher-structured questionnaire. By the data gathered, the findings revealed that respondents agreed that mechanisms of culture such as personality traits, beliefs, race or ethnicity, language, and religion contribute to job discrimination among Meranaw job applicants while profile has no significant relationship with most of the mechanisms identified. The study concludes that job discrimination based on culture towards Meranaws does exist, and the devices above of culture have a significant impact on the chance of Meranaw job applicants to be afforded with equal job opportunities in any workplace hierarchy.

**Keywords**– Social science, human resource management, job discrimination, Meranaw, descriptive correlational design, Marawi City, Philippines

## INTRODUCTION

As anyone who has ever worked in any organization is well aware, every workplace has its own “corporate culture.” Formally defined, this term refers to the beliefs and behaviors that determine how a company’s employees and management interact and handle outside business transactions. Often, corporate culture is implied, not expressly defined, and develops organically over time from the cumulative traits of the people the company hires (Investopedia, 2018). The global setting shown in research conducted by Bendick and Ehgan (2000) reveals how employers differ widely in their corporate cultures’ openness to non-traditional workers. Conscious or unconscious discrimination against women or people of color is part of the culture of more than twenty percent of all U.S. workplaces and is deeply entrenched in between seven and twelve percent. Both confrontational and cooperative approaches continue to be required to reduce this vital constraint on employment opportunities. Another seemingly rampant case is referred to as race-based discrimination, which, according to Trenerry (2012), is defined as discrimination based on race, ethnicity, culture or religion; the behaviors and practices that result in which, along with beliefs and prejudices that underlie them, are sometimes collectively referred to as racism. Race-based discrimination can reduce organizational productivity, commitment, trust, satisfaction, and workplace morale as well as increase cynicism, absenteeism, and staff turnover.

Few issues in today's society are as explosive as the existence of discrimination, bigotry, bias, and prejudices in various domains of the community. These domains are as informal as streets and other public places or as formal as schools and workplaces. The latter seems to have a much more profound impact on people subject to these unfair treatments because, in the case of employment, their livelihood, family needs, and future are severely affected. Hence, any act of discrimination should not be tolerated, considering its effects, both short-term and long-term, on the individuals who suffer this maltreatment. According to Bendick and Ehgan (2000), it is illegal for employers to discriminate based on an individual's religious beliefs, customs, values, race, gender, age, and traditions. Businesses are required to reasonably accommodate an employee's religious beliefs, as long as doing so does not have extremely negative consequences. To respond to the need for the policy that deals with job discrimination, countries establish laws that protect potential employees and those who are employed. The U.S. has the Civil Rights Act created in 1994. The Philippines also has the Philippine Labor Code, which provides equal protection to all employees and aspirants. Ideally, job applicants have to be afforded with equal protection in labor and employment by promoting and ensuring equal opportunities regardless of culture or religion and regulating relations between applicants and employers by the Department of Labor and Employment and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. In East Asia's complex ethnic mix of peoples, the need to avoid racial discrimination which may undermine social stability is understood clearly by governments and businesses. But while experts agree that progress is being made in tackling this potentially corrosive personnel problem, there is still a long way to go (Heng, Kastner & Rodrigo, 2017).

History and common knowledge prove that the Meranaws one of the minor ethnicities prone to discrimination in the Philippines. By essence, the Meranaws are an integral segment of the Filipino nation and must supposedly be viewed in the context of their role in our nation. The prevailing impression is that the Meranaw is a cultural minority and only a second-class Filipino. Their universal ratification is premised on their religious identity and ethnic posture. However, the Meranaws are seemingly incepting towards this limiting stature. They think highly of themselves. They believe they belong to the high stratum of Philippine society. They are social and amiable, sympathetic and hospitable, and like others, endowed with abilities and intelligence. As usually and culturally described, they do not readily come to terms when offended. If given responsibilities, however, and complimented accordingly, they are likely to prove their loyalty

and cooperation. The belief of the Meranaw applicants that they do not have the chance to be hired especially in multinational corporations still exists as an undying issue. In this study, the researchers explored to find out what constructs of cultural identity contribute towards discrimination among Meranaw applicants in any workplace in the Philippine setting. Further, their demographic profile and the said constructs were also correlated to ascertain whether a significant relationship exists between them. From these objects, the researchers wish to discuss the problems associated with job discrimination due to the cultural and religious identity of Meranaw applications and the benefits of utilizing diversity management in trying to counter the inherent patterns of discrimination that exist in any workplace hierarchy.

## FRAMEWORK

This study builds upon the concept of organizational culture. Organizational culture is a broad term that identifies differences between organizations in practices, beliefs, values, and symbols. Corporate culture consists of the unwritten rules of the game that corporate members rely on to get things done, make decisions, etc. Culture should not be equated with the formal structure or demographic composition of the organization, although the two may co-vary. Organizational culture is also distinct from the broader set of institutional forces—norms, logic, etc.—that shape all organizations in a field.

Organizational culture is often imagined as consisting of distinguishing features of organizations. King (2011) argues that this is not a necessary feature of organizational culture but identifying the distinguishing features of a culture may be needed from an empirical perspective if one aims to demonstrate a causal link between culture and job discrimination. This study best contends with the possible mechanisms that link culture to job discrimination, and these are the following.

**Personality Traits.** The totality of attitudes and values of an individual along with many other emotional, physical, and mental traits and characteristics constitute the personality. Although attitudes and values are internal, they may be viewed by others through the behavior of the person. As the person is observed over a period, his or her reactions to people, objects, and situations can make inferences about the person's attitudes and values (Atchison and Hill, 1978).

Not everyone thinks feels, looks, or acts alike. Some people rub others the wrong way, and this cannot necessarily be explained. Although personality

differences can cause conflict, they are also a precious resource for creative problem solving. Employees need to accept, respect and learn how to use these differences when they arise (Newstrom, 2011).

**Beliefs.** The candidate whose beliefs, outlook, and behavior are congruent with those existing within the current organization is likely to be an excellent cultural fit for the organization. An employee who is good cultural fit works well in the existing workplace environment. This may also include social values which are viewed as ideas about appropriate social and sexual behavior. Work ethics, wealth, and personal growth vary between cultures.

**Race or Ethnicity.** The media plays a significant role in creating or maintaining stereotypes about people based on the color of their skin that lead to job discrimination in the real world. Under race, it includes cultural differences in the workplace like dress wherein some cultures have specific clothing such as headscarves or turbans that are worn at all times. Employees are entitled to wear your religious attire at work unless it creates a safety hazard. If an employee's religious dress covers the face, he or she can be asked to show the face for reasonable identification purposes. Second is customs in which some cultures can or cannot have specific foods and drinks or may have rules about how food is prepared. The third is a family obligation wherein some cultures have high family priorities which may sometimes conflict with work. This occurs when there is too much desire to provide the better lifestyle to families thus offer them positions at work that may lead to nepotism bat work. Last is non-verbal behavior which includes eye contact, facial expressions, and hand gestures. How people interpret them varies between cultures (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2010).

**Language.** Individuals who speak minority languages have difficulty gaining employment in workplaces where English is the official and standard of practice. The words of all the Muslim groups are closely related to the words of the central Philippines, which belong to the Austronesian (Melayo-Polynesian) family of languages (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2018).

Employers cannot discriminate against employees based on language or accent unless these requirements can be established to be genuine and made in good faith. If proficiency in a particular word is a requirement for a position, the employer would need to be able to show that the demand is linked to the essential duties of the job, is imposed in good faith and considers the responsibility to accommodate to the point of undue hardship (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2008).

**Religion.** Religious harassment occurs when employees are coerced or required to participate (or not participate) in religious practices as a condition of employment. Harassment occurs when the employer pressures the employee to conform to another's beliefs or to give up his/her religious idea or practice. Religious harassment can also occur when employees are subjected to a hostile or offensive work environment as a result of their religion. Under Title VII, employers are legally obligated to provide a work environment that is free of discriminatory intimidation, ridicule, and insult. To make a hostile work environment claim, an employee must show that he/she was subjected to the harassment because of religion, that the harassment was unwelcome and sufficiently severe or pervasive in that it altered the conditions of the employee's employment and work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment (Ghumman, Ryan, Barclay, & Markel, 2013).

Some workplaces have cultures in which discriminatory attitudes or behavior would be so jarringly discordant with the prevailing atmosphere that, when they are expressed, they are rapidly suppressed by adverse social reactions or lack of ratification. Other workplaces have cultures in which discriminatory attitudes and behavior are not only tolerated but implicitly or explicitly condoned. There, racism and sexism may be visible and virulent, and even criminal harassment may go unchecked.

## OBJECTIVES

This paper sought to identify the mechanisms or constructs of culture that contribute to job discrimination towards Meranaw job applicants. Specifically, this study found to achieve the following objectives, (1) describe the Meranaw job applicants in terms of their demographic profile such as age, gender, highest educational attainment, civil status, employment status, and monthly income, (2) determine the perceptions of selected Meranaw job applicants on the constructs or mechanisms of cultural identity that contribute to job discrimination, namely, personality traits, beliefs, religion, race or ethnicity, and language, and (3) ascertain whether a significant relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents and the constructs of cultural identity exists.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study employed the descriptive method of research which is defined as fact-finding with the adequate and accurate interpretation of data. It is also referred to as normative survey method. It is derived from a survey which indicates the gathering of data regarding current conditions. On the other hand, the word “normative” is a theoretical, prescriptive approach to sociological studies that have the aim of appraising or establishing the values and norms that best fit the overall needs and expectations of society (Oxford Reference, 2018).

Moreover, the correlation design was adopted to investigate the relationship between variables in this study. Hence, the design of this study is descriptive-correlation in nature. The researcher asked for the consent of the respondents before conducting the survey that the data gathered will be used for research purposes only. Before the investigation, the researcher asked for approval and appropriate permissions to research the participants. The researcher also advised the respondents that information and identity shall be kept confidential and the forms shall be appropriately disposed of after consolidation.

### Research Site

The research was conducted in Marawi City, the capital city of the province of Lanao del Sur, the island of Mindanao, Philippines. The people of Marawi are called the Meranaws and speak the Meranaw language. They are named after Lake Lanao, which is called Meranaw in the language, after that its shores Marawi City lie. The city is also called the Summer Capital of the South because of its higher elevation and colder climate.

### Participants

The participants of this research were selected eighty-seven (87) Meranaw job seekers and employees specifically employed either government employee or private employee and unemployed either a graduate of a private institution or public institution who were able to attempt to apply for any job vacancy especially in the non-Muslim owned companies or organizations. The selection was randomly made, and their willingness to participate in the study was also taken into consideration. The research adopted purposive sampling. Though it may be small to represent the whole of the Meranaws who have experienced job discrimination, we have made use of the Mindanao State University's (MSU) data

which says that many Meranaw graduates in MSU were not able to land a job especially those who have been a candidate in multinational companies.

### **Instrumentation**

The data collection was carried out through survey questionnaires composed of two parts. The survey questionnaires are personally made by the researcher based on the items relevant to the identified mechanisms of culture that link to job discrimination. The first part comprised items that collected the demographic profile of the respondents regarding age, gender, highest educational attainment, employment status, civil status, employment status, and monthly income. The respondent puts a check on the category where they belong. The second part constituted indicators or statements for each construct or mechanism of culture, namely, personality traits, beliefs, religion, race or ethnicity, and language. The respondents rated the indicators using a four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to disagree strongly. The data obtained were classified, tabulated, and converted using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages. The descriptive-correlational design was employed in this study. The gathered data were treated using frequency and percentage, weighted mean, and Chi-square test of independence.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Respondents' Demographic Profile**

This study examined the constructs or mechanisms of culture, mainly focusing on whether they contribute to job discrimination among Meranaw job applicants. Specifically, the researchers aimed at describing the respondents regarding their demographic profile, soliciting their perceptions on the constructs, and the relationship between the two variables.

Regarding the demographic profile, the following findings were gathered. First, as to age, the most significant portion of the respondents (41.4%) were 25 to 29 years old, which reveal that they are still young and are still capable of rendering long service. Rendering service needs patience, dedication, and maturity. Employees of the age brackets under 25-29 can be reasonably credited with these qualities or traits, and the firmness, confidence, and air of authority and chances or opportunities that come with years and maturity.

Regarding gender, data revealed that the majority or 69% of the respondents are female. It has been an accepted fact that the population of the female is higher

than that of the male. However, according to Sears and Mallory (2014), sexual orientation and gender identity have no relationship to workplace performance. This suggests that gender is an irrelevant variable when speaking of work efficiency and effectiveness. Unfortunately, issues still circle companies and organizations about how applicants are evaluated during the recruitment process, and the problem emanates from the gender-bias of hiring managers.

Regarding highest educational attainment, data revealed that fifty-six (56) or 64.4% of the respondents are college graduates; twenty-one (21) or 24.1% are master's degree holders, and ten (10) or 11.5% of the respondents are doctorate holders. The findings prove that Meranaw job applicants are degree holders, both undergraduate and graduate levels. Thus, they are qualified to fill in vacant positions in companies or institutions and must be afforded with job opportunities.

Furthermore, findings revealed that forty-four (44) or 50.6% of the respondents are single; thirty-nine (39) or 44.8% are married; two (2) or 2.3% are separated, and two (2) or 2.3% are widowed. The findings suggest that the respondents need jobs to sustain their basic needs, especially those of their families. This implies that most organizations prefer only candidates for a job vacancy intended for hiring.

As to the employment status of the respondents, data revealed that seventy-nine (79) or 90.8% of the respondents are employed, and eight (8) or 9.2% of the respondents are unemployed. This may mean that the majority of the respondents can relate to the central issue of the study and to share their experiences in job applications and previous employment. According to Sollow (2017) of Deloitte, the employee experience is increasing in importance. This implies that there are cases that applicants are discriminated because of less exposure to workplace besides their field of specialization.

Finally, the monthly income of the respondents was also identified. As revealed, twenty-nine (29) or 33.3% of the respondents earn a monthly income range of 5,001 to 10,000; eighteen (18) or 20.7% earn 15,001 to 20,000; while seventeen (17) or 19.5% earn between 5,000 and below monthly. Moreover, fifteen (15) or 17.2% of the respondents earn a monthly income range of 10,001 to 15,000 and eight (8), or 9.2% earn 20,001 and above. According to Wage Order No. ARMM-15, minimum wage should be Php 250.00 per day (DOLE, 2014). This suggests that Meranaw employees are not competitively compensated.

## **Mechanisms of Culture**

In addition to the description of the respondents' demographic profile, the study solicited the respondents' perception on whether the mechanisms of culture contribute to the job discrimination they experienced, which include personality traits, beliefs, religion, race or ethnicity, and language. Based on the data gathered for personality traits, the respondents agreed that the seemingly hostile personality of some Meranaws contribute to job discrimination as well as their conservativeness, their pride or ego, and being social and amiable. Culturally, these qualities are inherent among Meranaws, thus a unique part of their personality traits. However, these usually are interpreted in a wrong manner. This suggests that employers have to know the unique qualities of job applicants and employees from different cultural backgrounds especially that not everyone thinks, feels, looks, or acts alike.

The second mechanism dealt with is the belief of the Meranaws. The respondents generally agreed as well that their beliefs, being different from that of the organizational culture, being not culturally fit a particular firm, and their social values contribute to job discrimination. This implies that the distinct beliefs of Meranaws are subject to prejudiced perceptions of employers or hiring managers.

A similar finding was also found for the race or ethnicity of the Meranaw job applicants. The respondents agreed that, individually, wearing the hijab of women and turban of men contribute to job discrimination. Thus, having different clothing from that of employers adds to job discrimination. Aside from that, having an Islamic name, facial expression and eye contact of Meranaws contribute to the job discrimination they encountered. Overall, the ethnic affiliation of Meranaw job applicants may lessen their chance to get hired for a specific job vacancy. The study revealed that some non-Muslim employers do not consider clothing, non-verbal behavior, customs, etc. of the Meranaws, although these are part of their affiliation and must be afforded with reasonable consideration.

Also, the respondents' perception of language-related issues as contributors to job discrimination was also determined. Data revealed that mispronouncing English words by some Meranaws lead to job discrimination. Speaking Tagalog or Bisaya incorrectly also does the same, so as with accent and intense sound of Meranaw language. Based on the findings, the system of words or signs that Meranaws use to express thoughts and feelings to their employer or towards others contribute to job discrimination. Every human group develops a language

similar to the dominant language of their environment but with its keywords and accents. Therefore, employers have to disregard the group affiliation of a particular applicant because words are mere symbols and conduct, or behavioral tendencies constitute another. They must not equate linguistic distinctiveness to the undesirability of potential employees.

Finally, the respondents disclosed agreement that religion as a mechanism can contribute to the job discrimination they encountered. Individually, praying five times a day and practicing Ramadan are perceived to be contributors to inefficiency in the workplace, thus contributing to job discrimination. Further, the Meranaws being Muslims who are usually judged by stereotyping also contributes to job discrimination. The commitment or devotion to the religious faith among the Meranaw job applicants as religious obligations affects their chance for job opportunities. This implies that some non-Muslim employers illegally discriminate Meranaws based on their religious affiliation since they do not consider their religious practices.

### **Correlation Analysis among Variables**

The third step in the data analysis was determining whether a significant relationship exists between the respondents' demographic profile and their perception of the mechanisms of culture as contributors to job discrimination. As data revealed, there is no significant relationship between the respondents' age and the mechanisms of culture. This may mean that Meranaw job applicants' age did not influence their perceptions of personality traits, beliefs, race or ethnicity, language, and religion being contributors to job discrimination.

Furthermore, when the gender of the respondents was correlated with the mechanisms of culture, the results indicate that the relationship is still insignificant. As what the data signify, the respondents' gender identity was not associated with the manner in which they perceive the mechanisms of culture as contributors to job discrimination. Therefore, gender seems to be irrelevant as an intervening variable in the experiences of the respondents with job discrimination in as far as the mechanisms of culture are concerned.

Concerning their highest educational attainment, the analysis showed that the respondents' perceptions of the mechanisms of culture were also insignificantly associated with their educational background. This may mean that the respondents' attainments in education do not matter in the way they perceive the mechanisms of culture as contributors to job discrimination. Hence, their experiences with job discrimination were comparable regardless of their credentials or qualifications.

Moreover, the correlation analysis also showed that the respondents' civil status was not significantly related to their perceptions of the mechanisms of culture as linked to job discrimination. Similar to the previous findings, whether the respondents are single, married, or widowed, their experiences and perceptions of culture-related constructs as sources of job discrimination were similar or comparable. Thus, civil status is not a relevant factor in the respondents' manner of perceiving the said mechanisms as contributors to job discrimination.

Focusing on another demographic profile which is employment status, the data revealed that their employment status did not significantly influence the respondents' perception of the mechanisms of culture. Even though that a vast majority of the respondents are employed, their opinions of the constructs being causes of job discrimination were still comparable in general, thus implying that their experiences were similar.

Lastly, when their monthly income was correlated with their perceptions, the results indicated that the relationship turned out to be insignificant. This also signifies that the respondents' agreement that the mechanisms of culture contribute to job discrimination remains a general perception among all regardless of their monthly income. Thus, their experiences with job discrimination are considered comparable.

## CONCLUSION

This study was interested in determining the potentiality of specific mechanisms or constructs of culture as sources of job discrimination as perceived by Meranaws. Based on the findings, Meranaw job applicants are discriminated by non-Meranaw or non-Muslim employers because of their personality traits, beliefs, race or ethnicity, language, and religion. The results indicate that the respondents consider the said mechanisms of culture to have the significant impact on their chance to be afforded with equal job opportunities in any workplace hierarchy. Thus, Meranaw applicants suffer the consequences of prejudiced perceptions of those who are unaware of the intricacies of the Meranaw culture, practices, and inherent characteristics. This calls for a mechanism that does not force applicants or employees from minority groups to choose between their faith and their jobs. The findings of the study imply that some non-Muslim employers or firms illegally discriminate Meranaw job applicants or potential applicants in individual workplaces. Thus, the title VII of the Civil Rights Act which states that "it is illegal for employers to discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex,

or national origin” has been violated by some non-Muslim employers who may lessen the commitment of the job applicants to render services.

## **TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH**

The findings of the study may be best interpreted by various media of communication to disseminate its significance and impact. Blogs in social media may be designed for job seekers, articles published in job search websites (like LinkedIn, Indeed, Jobstreet, etc.) may be intended for job search agents and applicants, and talk shows in mass media to disseminate information to other stakeholders.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of the study, the following are highly recommended:

The research suggests that Meranaw employees and job applicants should show employers that Meranaws possess good personality traits and that Meranaws know how to recognize others' attitudes and adjust on their own. The study further suggests the following: Meranaw employees and job applicants should show employers that Meranaws are flexible to any culture they socialize with and could quickly adapt to changes; there is a need for employers to accommodate the employees sincerely held religious belief unless to do so would result in an undue hardship for the organization; meranaw employees and job applicants should show respect on the organizational culture of their employers to be respected in return regarding culture; employers should recognize the differences between culture and that give considerations on the beliefs of every culture of their employees or their job applicants; employers should acknowledge and consider the race of their employees or job applicants regarding their clothing, names derived from their way of life, etc; and, concerning language, the study recommends religions, asa way of life, etc.

Concerning language, the research suggests the following: There is a need for Meranaw employees and job applicants to develop and enhance their English proficiency; there is a need for Meranaw employees and job applicants to familiarize, if not learn, the language of non-Meranaws to lessen communication barriers; employers have to recognize and consider that the fossilized and robust accent of Meranaws is part of the Meranaw language and concerning religion. The study recommends the following: employers have to consider the religious

practices of the Meranaws because these are part of their obligations as Muslims and the hiring and selection policies and procedures being adopted in the Philippine setting should be thoroughly reviewed so that employers would be able to make uniform policies in hiring employees that disregard the religious affiliation of the candidates.

Employers who practice job discrimination towards Meranaw applicants have to be given attention by DOLE and Philippine EEOC to be oriented with the labor laws and labor administration of the Philippines.

Universities and colleges have to implement annual job fairs in their institutions for their graduates to have job opportunities.

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