

REBUILDING THE SOCIAL DIALOGUE AND PROMOTING INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATIONS. A TOOL FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION IN TIMES OF CRISIS

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This paper addresses the developing research agenda in the context of the difficulties of the socio-economic environment and its impact on equality policies in the employment context. We present four studies developed in the framework of improving the social dialogue and the promotion of inclusive organizations, highlighting the status of the issue in Spain and its meaning for professional practice. The studies focus on a) the need to train and empower social actors - especially workers' representatives - to lead social innovation and promote inclusive organizations, b) proceedings for the current manifestations of what is known as "modern discrimination" in the work context, c) labor integration of persons with disabilities, and d) supporting policies to balance work and personal life.

Key words: Social dialogue, Social exclusion, Discrimination, Sexual orientation, LGB, Disability, Conciliation.

Se aborda en el presente trabajo el desarrollo de una agenda de investigación enmarcada por las dificultades del entorno socioeconómico y su incidencia en las políticas de igualdad en el contexto laboral. Se presentan cuatro estudios desarrollados en el marco de la mejora del diálogo social y la promoción de organizaciones inclusivas, resaltando el estado del tema en España y su significado para la práctica profesional. Los estudios se centran en a) la necesidad de capacitar y apoderar a los agentes sociales - especialmente a los representantes de los trabajadores - para liderar la innovación social y la promoción de organizaciones inclusivas, b) las actuaciones ante las manifestaciones actuales de la denominada discriminación moderna en el contexto laboral, c) las barreras para promover la integración laboral de las personas con discapacidad, y d) el apoyo a las políticas de conciliación entre el trabajo y la vida personal.

Palabras clave: Diálogo social, Exclusión social, Discriminación, Orientación sexual, LGB, Discapacidad, Conciliación.

The social dialogue has been defined as the process by which management and employees attempt to resolve their differences in employment relationships through the exchange of information (ILO, 2005). This formal dialogue may involve discussions, consultations, negotiations and joint actions undertaken by the social partners on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policies. In the current period of crisis, the social partners are playing an important role in dealing with this economic turmoil and the alarming challenges they face in response to the rapid and dramatic changes in the socioeconomic environment. Consequently, the European Commission has promoted the development of a constructive social dialogue between employers and employees, to enhance the mutual trust between

the parties involved, to combat social exclusion and to improve the quality of working life (European Commission, 2010, 2011).

In Spain, the call to improve the social dialogue is even more pressing for two reasons: a) because, despite the severe social and economic situation that is affecting the growing increase in unemployment (Eurostat, 2013), data relating to the climate of labor relations and the development of social dialogue show that Spain maintains a climate of less cooperation between the parties than most European countries (Euwema, Munduate, Elgoibar, Pender, & García, 2014), and b) because, in times of economic difficulty, equality policies and efforts to promote more inclusive work environments tend to suffer major cuts, and the social exclusion of disadvantaged groups is intensified (European Commission, 2012). In this context, the role of the social partners is crucial in leading the responses of resilience, such as the innovation of the social dialogue and the promotion of inclusive organizations.

The research agenda developed in recent years by the Research and Development of Human Resources and Organizations (INDRHO Research Group) (<http://grupo.us.es/grupoindrho/web/>) has been marked by the difficulties of this socio-economic context and its impact on both the management of human resources and organizations. We present four studies that have been carried out in the context of improving the social

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dialogue and the promotion of inclusive organizations, highlighting the state of the art in this field in Spain, its meaning for professional practice and the measures developed for social innovation in this context.

THE INNOVATION OF THE SOCIAL DIALOGUE: EMPOWERING THE WORKERS' REPRESENTATIVES

Workers representatives (WR) in the EU face rapid and challenging changes in their working context involving aspects such as the individualization of employment relations, the changing composition of the workforce, the fragmentation of social class and the decline in union membership. In turn, the organization itself also face changes relating to decentralization and downsizing, external and internal labor flexibility, and the demand for new and more complex skills, that generally tend to weaken the role of WRs and the works committee. The career development of WRs is blocked on many occasions, and their role is affected by poor or limited presence in decision-making and low trust between the social partners, which causes stressful situations and role conflict for WRs (Munduate, Elgoibar, & Medina, 2013).

The situation in Spain is not dissimilar to the profile of European WRs, although it is worth mentioning the influence of a tradition of very competitive labor relations, in the context of the difficulties of union representation during the period prior to the transition to democracy (Munduate, 1993). While such relationships quickly adapted to the democratic system, there persists a tendency towards confrontation between WRs and senior management, low participation of employees and WRs in decision-making (Munduate, García, Pender, Elgoibar & Medina, 2014), as well as the demand for the social partners to master new and more complex skills, in order to manage employment relations in changing situations (Munduate & Gravenhorts, 2003).

How should WRs be trained and empowered, so that they can carry out their role effectively and contribute constructively to the improvement of social dialogue? This was the research question in a study conducted in eight European countries (Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Netherlands, Spain, Estonia, Portugal and the UK). Seventy-nine in-depth interviews were held with workers' representatives and union leaders, in the participating countries. Subsequently the survey feedback method was applied in each of the participating countries using national focus groups with workers' representatives, business representatives and experts in employee relations. The results showed some clear trends, which we will summarize below; also, we present good practices, developed in this study, which have been formulated in accordance with these trends. Firstly, it has been determined that *cooperative labor relations are based on trust*, which is an important conduit for promoting social innovation and win-win solutions for all parties involved. Secondly, *the promotion of skills in conflict management* is required. WRs are natural conflict managers and need training in this area. This training will enable them to deal with complex

and difficult negotiations, creating value with both distributive and integrative strategies. Training as mediators is also important to help the social partners themselves to resolve disputes and conflicts and to promote inclusive organizations. Thirdly, *the renewal of trade unions* is necessary, in order to attract new, young workers to become members. This requires unions to discuss their values and to adapt to the diversity of their members, both current members and potential members in the near future. The unions are still implanted and oriented in their activity at the nation level, and require a boost to their development and implementation at European level. And fourthly, it has been shown that the *empowering* of both the employees and the WRs, is a strategic advantage for organizations, and it is important that the senior management of the organization and the national and European policies invest resources in this direction. Improving the skills of WRs, both individually (as WRs) and at group level (works committee), is a basic and excellent way of empowering WRs. An important challenge in this sense refers to WRs being aligned with other forms of participation in the workplace itself. In this regard rules are needed that develop formal structural measures to empower the WRs at national and European level, and these measures must be implemented (Munduate, Elgoibar, & Euwema, 2012).

FIGHTING MODERN DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE

According to the latest study on discrimination in the countries of the European Union (*Eurobarometer*, European Commission, 2012), 54% of Europeans think that, because of the economic crisis, there has been a decrease in the efforts of organizations to promote the equality policies within them. In times of crisis, the resources invested in creating an inclusive environment free from discrimination have been re-distributed to other purposes, without taking into consideration the benefits, including the economic benefits (e.g., talent retention, workers' satisfaction) that anti-discriminatory policies provide. In this scenario, some minority groups may be at a particular disadvantage. This is the case of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people. European data show, firstly, that 36% of the population perceives that the crisis promotes discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender (European Commission, 2012) and, secondly, that 44% of Spaniards consider that discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation is widespread in Spain. This second figure, although below the European average, reveals a disconnection with the official discourse promoted at state level, which is reflected in the innovative legislative changes made in the last decade, permitting same-sex couples to marry and adopt children (Law 13/2005 of 1 July).

Two psychosocial theories may help to understand the phenomenon of discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation: the theory of stigma (Goffman, 1963), and the theory of modern discrimination (Cortina, 2008).

Goffman (1963) defines stigma as a personal characteristic that society considers to be outside the "norm" accepted by the majority. Stigmas can be visible, in which case by their nature

they immediately discredit people carrying them, or they can be invisible, in which case they are considered only potentially discreditable, i.e. only when they become visible to others. Since heteronormativity (Losert, 2008), which refers to the set of rules that establish heterosexuality as the affective and emotional ideal to follow, has affected and continues to affect the lives of many people, LGB people may choose not to make their sexual orientation visible at work, for fear of being victims of negative acts.

Furthermore, even though our society today has managed to limit the negative consequences of heteronormativity, opening a debate on its acceptability and considering its possible rejection, some forms of discrimination continue to be perceived toward LGB people. These behaviors are often manifested in subtle and ambiguous ways, assuming the appearance of involuntary acts. This is what Andersson and Pearson (1999) define as "workplace incivility", referring to all behaviors that are intended to harm the other party, although it is difficult to identify the voluntariness of those who perpetrate such acts. Therefore, although it is now very difficult to find overt discriminatory behavior, as it is rejected socially, subtle forms of discrimination persist, acts that Cortina (2008) groups under the label "modern discrimination." The factors that trigger modern discrimination are cognitive (stereotypes) and affective (prejudice), which in turn interact with the norms and beliefs present in a given context (e.g., work) (Cortina, 2008). Due to the difficulty in identifying modern discrimination, it represents a threat to the victims and to the organization as a whole.

The arguments presented above highlight the importance of identifying all of the factors that may represent a threat to LGB people within organizations. In recent years, in Spain, there has been a proliferation of studies aimed at exploring the social consequences caused by the legal changes, also analyzing the consequences that the new laws have had for same-sex parent families (González, Díez, López, Martínez, & Morgado, 2013; Pichardo, 2011). In addition, several studies have focused on prejudice towards LGB groups (Quiles del Castillo, Betancor, Rodríguez, Rodríguez, & Coello, 2003) and stereotypes (Guasch, 2001), analyzing how LGB people have been affected by regulations that have been in force since the Franco dictatorship (Olmeda, 2004; Osborne, 2012).

However, little attention has been devoted to the study of the experience of LGB people in the workplace. Therefore, knowing that the current crisis could place minority groups at a disadvantage, the INDRHO research group has added to its agenda, the study of the daily experience of LGB people in Spanish workplaces. Thus, all of the aspects that are vital in shaping their experience are being studied, in an attempt to explain the factors that determine the process of disclosure at work, referring to the process by which LGB people communicate their sexual orientation to others.

Studies carried out on LG workers from different areas of Spain (Di Marco, Arenas, Hoel, & Munduate, in press), have shown that there is considerable diversity in both the strategies

employed in revealing sexual orientation, and the factors responsible for the choice of a particular strategy of disclosure. Although some experts believe that coming out is a dichotomous process ("being in or out of the closet"), previous research has shown that there are many possible ways and degrees of coming out (for a synthesis of the ways and degrees of coming out, see Griffin, 1992). Indeed, confirming this last hypothesis, it has been found that in Spain LG people adopt various stages of disclosure when disclosing their sexual orientation at work. As such, among people who do not disclose their sexual orientation at work, the preferred strategy is to use *covering*. This translates to avoiding all social situations (conversations, events outside of work, etc.) where questions may arise about their personal life. People who use this strategy are trying to create barriers, never making closer ties beyond the professional sphere. In situations where it is necessary to give information about their private life (to answer a direct question, for example), people often talk about their partner in a neutral manner, i.e., without specifying their sex. In a minority of cases, people hide their sexual orientation, feeling obliged to invent a parallel heterosexual life – a strategy known as *passing*. Some participants speak of the difficulty of handling situations where they are required to mention their personal life, such as on coffee breaks with colleagues where the typical topics of conversation revolve around the private life of each person. Likewise in this case the outcome is shallower relationships at work, in an attempt to keep personal life and work life completely separate. People who usually reveal their sexual orientation in the workplace do so implicitly, talking casually about their personal life and steering conversations to the significant information, through which colleagues can deduct their sexual orientation – the *implicitly out strategy*. In addition, there are cases of people revealing explicitly that they are lesbian or gay – known as the *explicitly out strategy*. Choosing an explicit or similar strategy depends on the degree of closeness and trust achieved with the coworker.

Among the reasons given for choosing one strategy or another, it has been observed that the fear of rejection, distrust of the working environment and the sector of activity can be some of the factors that push LG people not to reveal their sexual orientation at work (Di Marco et al., in press) as well as perceiving the work environment as discriminatory (Di Marco, Hoel, Munduate, & Arenas, 2013). Consistent with the previous research (e.g., Ragins, 2004) non-disclosure of sexual orientation at work produces effects at both the personal and the organizational level. According to the Spanish respondents, interpersonal relationships, motivation and well-being, among other things, are adversely affected (Di Marco et al., in press; Di Marco, Arenas, Munduate, & Hoel, 2013); in addition, teamwork is impaired if it is not possible for members to openly share information about their personal life, and their intention to leave the organization increases.

The results of the research carried out to date indicate that properly managing diversity and promoting work environments that are free of discrimination is a challenge for all

organizations, even more so in times of crisis. The starting point of this challenge is the inclusion of sexual diversity within the definition of diversity, promoting the training of senior managers and creating internal support networks for LGB people.

THE INCLUSION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN ORDINARY EMPLOYMENT

One of the challenges for today's organizations is for their employees to adapt well and quickly. This process is even more complex if the new workers are disabled, and are subject to certain stigmas and prejudices (McLaughlin, Bell, & Stringer, 2004). In a period of severe economic crisis, people with disabilities are particularly vulnerable in the labor market, with the risk of a lack of social integration and participation on equal terms with other citizens (Ruiz & Moya, 2005, 2007).

Although the difficulties in the employment of these people are not new, what is new is the particular concern to solve them from an approach focused primarily on the right to equality (Rodríguez-Piñero, 2005). In this line, the integration of disabled people at work needs to be understood as a standardized process that seeks the ultimate goal of promoting employment under the same conditions as other workers.

Studies on the employment situation of people with disabilities have focused primarily on issues related to accessing employment and the adaptation of the job and the work environment to the needs of each individual (e.g., Colella & Varma, 1999; Corrigan & Shapiro, 2010, López et al., 2007). However, knowledge about the process of adaptation of individuals with disabilities to the job, after completion of the entry process to an organization, is almost anecdotal (Colella, DeNisi, & Varma, 1998).

In this sense, coworkers play a pivotal role in the workers' adaptation to the job. Colleagues are the main source of acquiring information about the organization and they are responsible for creating a positive environment and a climate of support (Stone & Colella, 1996). Various studies have shown that work teams have the greatest influence on new employees during social adaptation to work, due to phenomena linked to power and trust in interpersonal relationships (Moreland & Levine, 2002). In addition, the presence of diversity factors, such as disability, can negatively affect the personal relationships of team members. As noted by the theory of social categorization (Turner, 1985) and the paradigm of similarity-attraction (Schneider, 1987), there is a preference for relationships with those perceived as similar to oneself, rather than those belonging to minority groups, such as people with disabilities.

In a study carried out by Medina and Munduate (2012) the characteristic of the work team that could affect the work adjustment of persons with disabilities were analyzed. The results showed that the affective climate of the team, defined as the degree of comfort and satisfaction shared by team members (Gamero, González-Romá, & Peiró, 2008), was the main group process to explain various indicators of the labor adjustment of people with disabilities. Specifically, the existence of a positive

affective climate within the team positively influenced the functional and affective organizational support perceived by people with disabilities and the level of discrimination perceived in the workplace. Also, people with disabilities that are inserted into teams where there is a positive affective climate feel more satisfied and more confident in dealing with their problems, they value their relationship with their peers as more positive, close and cooperative, they are more committed to the organization and present less intention to leave.

Other group factors explaining the adjustment and the quality of working life for people with disabilities were the existence of a climate of disability support within the team and the quality of the relationship between team members in terms of acceptance, mutual respect and cooperation in carrying out the tasks. In response to the various types of disabilities analyzed (physical-organic, sensory and intellectual disability), the influence of these team processes on the different indicators of labor adjustment was lower in the case of the intellectually disabled group.

The conclusions drawn from this study allow us to develop programs of training and development of teams in order to enable an optimal reception of the disabled person, and thereby increase the success of their insertion and integration at work. Researching the labor adjustment of workers with disabilities in ordinary employment and offering proposals for organizational management to work with the teams in which they are inserted, is a further boost for the normalization of people with disabilities and their participation in organizations on equal terms with other employees.

WORK-FAMILY RECONCILIATION

In Spain, the study of work-family balance has been carried out from three different perspectives, following the directives of international research. Since role stress theory (Goode, 1960), it has been suggested that involvement in a life domain -e.g., work-exhausts the individual's resources of time, emotions and affect, making it difficult for them to meet the demands of other domains -e.g., family. In this sense, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) define work-family conflict as 'a form of inter-role conflict in which the roles of the work and family spheres are incompatible in some way' (p.77). In Spain, one of the first studies that adopted this perspective focused on the adaptation and analysis of the psychometric properties of the scale of work-family conflict by Kopelman, Greenhaus and Connolly (1983) (Martínez-Pérez & Osca, 2001). Subsequent studies have shown the importance of analyzing gender in order to better understand the processes involved in the interaction between work and family (Coronel, Moreno, & Carrasco, 2010; Martínez, Carrasco, Aza, Blanco, & Espinar, 2011). Thus, De Luis, Martínez and Vela (2004) observed gender differences among the antecedents of work-family conflict; Calvo-Salguero et al., (2012) found that women perceive more interference from family in their work than men, because traditionally they spend more time in this domain (Guttek, Searle, & Klepa, 1991). Researching this in greater

depth, Cantera, Cubells, Martínez and Blanch (2009) observe that it is the domestic responsibility and not the sex that is the factor responsible for the interest in the field of work and family. In other words, when women and men take on domestic responsibilities, this increases the value they place on the family, but also on work-as a source of funds to meet the family needs. This high interest in the two most important areas for men and women highlights the need for progress in the study of work-family reconciliation in Spain based on equality between women and men. Traditionally it has been the perspective of work-family conflict, paying more attention to the negative aspect of the work-family balance, which has guided the study of the interaction between work and family. However, the work-family balance can also be analyzed from a positive perspective. From the theoretical framework of role accumulation (Sieber, 1974) it is suggested that participation in different roles allows people to acquire certain skills that can be transferred from one domain to another, which enable them to carry out these roles better. In this sense, participating in different life domains allows people to generate resources that will be useful to meet the demands generated in the various spheres in which they participate. Based on this framework, Greenhaus and Powell (2006) define the concept of work-family enrichment as the degree to which experiences in one role enable an individual to improve the quality of life, performance and affective experiences in the other role. In Spain, this new positive perspective on reconciliation has barely been developed.

A second line of research in this field has been directed to the study of the incidence of work-family conflict on the health and well-being of people. Notable studies include the one by Sanz-Vergel and Rodríguez-Muñoz (2011) who observed that the work-family conflict mediates the relationship between job stressors such as bullying and the health of individuals. In this line, there is growing interest in identifying the factors that contribute to reducing the negative effects of work-family conflict, identifying moderators such as daily recovery capacity (Sanz-Vergel, Demerouti, Moreno-Jiménez, & Mayo, 2010), satisfaction with aspects of the work (Calvo-Salguero, Martínez-de-Lecea and Carrasco-González, 2011), or the internal and external attributions (Rodríguez & Nouvillas (2007).

A third line of research has been oriented to the study of reconciliation policies, creating models that include the main macro, micro and meso variables that influence the effectiveness of such measures (Poelmans, 2004). In this regard, a negative relationship has been identified between reconciliation policies and experiences of work-family conflict (Kossek, Pichler, Bodner, & Hammer, 2012) and the moderating role has been detected of variables such as the national culture, the culture of support for reconciliation and the personality (Masuda & Visio, 2012).

The development of these lines of research in Spain has coincided with the prioritization of gender equality policies in recent years (Gartzia & Lopez-Zafra, 2012), but the constraints resulting from the enormous economic and financial crisis have tended to paralyze these policies. In this context of ambivalence,

the research agenda of the INDRHO group has focused on analyzing the joint experiences of conflict and enrichment in the current context in Spain, their impact on the health and well-being of people, and the gender differences in these experiences. It has also included the study of the role of organizational culture in equality policies in Spain.

The results of the experiences of conflict and enrichment show that, indeed, people are able to experience conflict and enrichment at the same time, and that there are significant differences between men and women, in the sense that there are women who are able to experience a pattern characterized by high levels of conflict, together with moderate levels of enrichment, whereas this pattern is nonexistent among men (Boz, Martínez-Corts, & Munduate, 2009a). In turn, the various combinations of conflict and enrichment show a different impact on the well-being of people. Thus, people with high or moderate experiences of enrichment manifest greater well-being than other combinations. It has also been proven that the experience of work-family enrichment helps to reduce the impact of certain job demands, such as interpersonal conflicts at work, on work satisfaction (Boz, Martínez-Corts, & Munduate, 2009b). It has been concluded in this regard that this enriching view of the experiences of reconciliation is an important step in the research and in the development of reconciliation policies. In line with studies that highlight the need to review reconciliation from the gender perspective, the previous results contribute to demystifying the negative effects of reconciliation for women. The study by Boz, Martínez-Corts and Munduate (2007) shows that, while both men and women report more experiences of enrichment than of work-family conflict, women show higher levels of enrichment than men. These results show that, in Spain, women who work and have families acquire various skills in the different domains in which they participate -work and the family- and they transfer these skills from one sphere to the other and vice versa, allowing them greater effectiveness and well-being than people who do not have such experiences. In this sense, it seems that the prejudices that some organizations have with regards to hiring married women, due to conciliation issues, lack rational arguments to support them.

Finally, in relation to the results of reconciliation policies in Spanish companies, the study by Boz (2013) on the mediating effect of organizational culture between the use of reconciliation policies and work-family enrichment shows that in the extent to which employees use reconciliation policies, barriers appear that are related to time management and promotion opportunities, and this situation has a negative impact on the experiences of enrichment and a positive one on the experience of work-family conflict. The most important conclusion for intervention and practice relates to establishing the conditions that enable the use of reconciliation policies, by promoting a culture of support for the use of such policies (Beléndez, Martín, & Hernandez, 2013), and that favor the experiences of work-family enrichment in the Spanish cultural context (Demerouti, Martínez-Corts, & Boz, 2013a, 2013b).

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the studies summarized in this paper show that the improvement of the social dialogue and the promotion of inclusive organizations are a response of resilience to limit the negative consequences of the crisis that is currently affecting European countries. Given the important role played by the WRs in these processes of social innovation, their empowerment and sustainable motivation in performing their role are key strategies that fit with the EU policies and the various directives issued by the European Commission (2010) with the aim of promoting cooperative labor relations and constructive social dialogue. As shown in the various studies developed in this work, the social partners have a big responsibility to exercise their mediation in the processes of labor adjustment of workers with disabilities in ordinary employment, preventing episodes of modern discrimination that occur in the work environment due to sexual orientation, gender or other diversity, and ultimately promoting an inclusive culture in the workplace. Therefore a collective effort is required in this direction, to enhance the role of the social partners and help them to adapt to diversity and the changing needs of the people they represent, to fight against social exclusion, and to improve the quality of working life.

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