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Perception of Gender Equality Statements

Explicit Mention of Non-Binary Gender Identities Does Not Negatively Impact the Image of an Organisation.

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Theoretical background

Of 241 top European companies' web-site presentations, only 48% had an equality statement referring to gender (Singh & Point, 2006).

Of such descriptions, major global companies construct gender as binary and stable in their gender equality statements (Bendl, Fleischmann, & Hofmann, 2009).

The framing of gender equality statements as focusing on opportunities for *women* versus opportunities for *all employees* have a negative affect on applicant evaluation of the organisation (Cundiff, Ryuk & Cech, 2018). However, the impact of mentioning non-binary gender identities is as of yet unstudied.

The current study investigated how different gender equality statements in organisation descriptions influence

- organisation image in terms of perceived diversity.
- perceived equity within an organisation and the appeal of an organisation as an employer

Hypotheses

H₁ Inclusion of a gender equality statement mentioning more than two genders will result in higher perceived diversity compared to other equality statements.

H₂ Inclusion of a gender equality statement will lead to higher perceived equity and higher organisation appeal than no gender equality statement

Methods

Participants were randomised to one of four organisation descriptions with different types of statements

- equality between women and men (*binary gender*)
- equality between women, men, and individuals with non-binary and other gender identities (*multiple genders*)
- equality regardless of gender (*non-specific gender*)
- no mention of gender (*no gender*)

The sample consisted of 404 Swedish participants (189 women, 205 men, 2 individuals with a non-binary gender identity, 8 NA) with a mean age of 44 years (*SD* = 10.63), recruited from Qualtrics Research Panels.

Measures

Perceived diversity

- 1-7 rating of organisation diversity
- Picture choice of employees with normative and non-normative gender expressions (see Figure 1)

Perceived equity

- 6 items on organisation fairness

Organisation appeal

- Job appeal scale (Gaucher et al., 2011)



Figure 1. Subset of pictures measuring perceived diversity for normative and non-normative gender expression. "From what you have read about the organisation, which two people do you believe work within the organisation?"

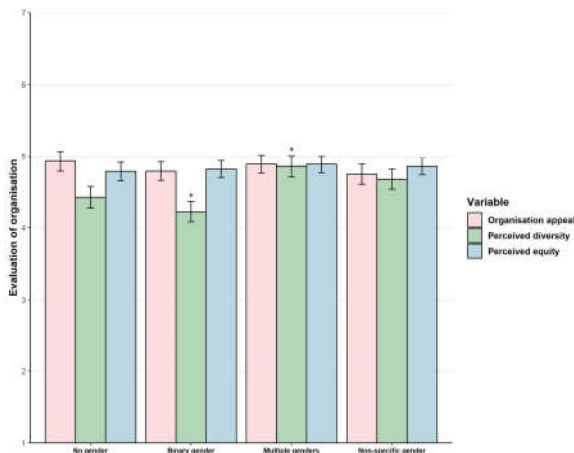


Figure 2. Mean values by condition for organisation appeal, perceived diversity, and perceived equity. Note: **p* = .01. Error bars represent standard errors of the means.

Conclusions

- The current experiment showed no negative consequences for appeal of organisation as an employer or perceived equity of the organisation from using gender equality statements which explicitly include individuals of all gender identities
- The current experiment also indicates that an organisation is seen as more generally diverse when gender equality statements explicitly include individuals of all gender identities, compared to mentioning only women and men. An organisation is also seen as more likely to employ individuals with non-normative gender expressions when either a gender equality statement mentioning multiple genders or no specific genders are used.
- Further research on the impact of perceived sincerity of organisations' equality statements and organisation sector could be further studied with regards to influence of equality statements on organisation image.

Results

- There was no difference in perceived equity of the organisation based on type of equality statement, $F(3,400) = 0.12, p = .95$, nor in organisation appeal, $F(3,400) = 0.39, p = .76$. Thus, *H₁* was not supported.
- There was an effect of type of gender equality statement on perceived diversity, $F(3,400) = 3.74, p = 0.01, \eta^2 = 0.03$. Pairwise comparisons showed that perceived diversity was higher in the *multiple genders* condition compared to the *binary gender* condition ($p = .01, d = 0.43$). No other pairs differed significantly. Figure 2 shows descriptive data for each condition.
- A chi-square test for independence showed a significant difference in picture choice based on condition, $\chi^2(6) = 24.62, p < .001$. A test of column proportions showed that the frequency of normative/normative choice was higher in *no gender* and *binary gender* conditions, while frequency of non-normative/non-normative choice was higher in the *multiple genders* and *non-specific gender* conditions. Choice distribution is displayed in Figure 3.

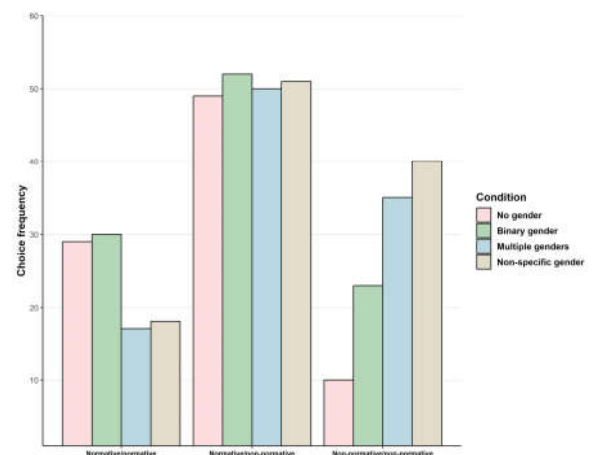


Figure 3. Frequency of picture choice by condition. Possible picture choices were: two normative pictures, one normative picture and one non-normative picture, and two non-normative pictures.

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