

Effect of ethnic discrimination on promotion practices along with moderating role of upward influence: A study on public sector universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of ethnic discrimination on promotion practices along with moderating role of upward influence. Data was collected from Pushtoon managerial and non-managerial employees working in public sector universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Using convenient sampling technique, 300 self-administered close ended questionnaires were distributed in public sector universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Hypotheses were tested using linear regression technique. Results revealed that ethnic discrimination has significant effect on promotion practices but the upward influence has insignificant effect on promotion practices. On the other hand, the upward influence moderate between ethnic discrimination and promotion practices. Implications for research and practice have been delineated.

Keywords: ethnic discrimination, promotion practices and upward influence

1. Introduction

Ethnic discrimination is considered a cause of major concern in organizations all over the world (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998). It has been suggested that differentiating between employees on the basis of their ethnic group affiliation affects them psychologically and causes issue in their academic motivation, problem behavior, mental health and school achievement (Fleming & Offord, 1991). Furthermore, studies also suggest that ethnic discrimination strongly impacts on key labor market outcomes like promotions, earnings and job opportunities (Leo Kaas & Chirstian Manger, 2012). Especially in Pakistan, this issue is vastly under researched with only a hand full of studies available on this topic (see: Channar, Abbassi & Ujan, 2011).

In previous literature, most of the researchers have studied the effects of race of supervisor on performance attribution of employees (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1993). The effect of ethnic discrimination has also been studied on various career outcomes (Greenhaus, Parasuraman & Wormley, 1990). Ethnic discrimination has been found to negatively impact on employees' promotion and performance evaluation (Ilgen & Youtz, 1986). Still, little is known about how ethnic discrimination gives disadvantages employees in the public sector organization. Social exchange theory (Homans, 1958) suggests that both the supervisors and workers consider their own benefits and wants when interacting with or supporting each other. If the employees

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perceive that their supervisor supports them, they work hard for organization in return (Korsgaard et al., 2010). Thus, this study is one of the first to examine the effect of ethnic discrimination on promotion practices. When seen from the perspective of employees, it is highly logical to assume that they may also use several techniques to counter the effect of ethnic discrimination on their job and in order to survive in the organization. This is especially applicable for organizations operating in countries where finding alternate job is difficult to high unemployment, Favoritism, Cronyism, and Nepotism etc. However, no such suggestions can be found in the previous literature.

Taking social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) into context, employees may use various exchange tactics on various levels to influence their supervisor. It is documented that use upward influence is a vital facet of organizational actions and add considerably to a person's efficiency (PeIz, 1952; Schilit, 1986). Keeping the above in mind, upward influence can have a significant impact on subordinate-supervisor relationship in the current scenario. Therefore, to find out whether such tactics help discriminated employees' counter the ill effects of discrimination, this study will also consider upward influence as a moderator on the relationship ethnic between ethnic discrimination with promotion practices. This study will provide an overview on the various outcomes of ethnic discrimination and how discriminated employees are affected as compared to other employees in modern organizations. Moreover, the importance of using upward influence for such employees will also be highlighted. In the earlier period, research has made significant contributions to understanding the upward influence in organizations by which applicants expand conformity from those at superior rank in the official organizational arrangement. Few studies have investigated the effect of upward influence on promotion (Ferris & Judge, 1991; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988). There are too several studies of ethnic group differences in the links of different developmental outcomes (e.g., Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992; Stevenson, Chen, & Uttal, 1990).

Furthermore, by covering major aspects of ethnic discrimination in organizations this will be the very first study to provide an insight on the issue of ethnic discrimination in Pakistani public sector organizations. Thus it will form the theoretical basis for further studies on this topic in Pakistani context. The results from this study will allow managers and leaders to practically study and identify the ethnic discrimination in Pakistani public sector organizations, its effect on employees, the organization and the techniques used by discriminated employees to counter these situations.

2. Literature review

2.1. More ethnic discrimination

Ethnic discrimination is defined as "distinction by race, skin color, ethnicity or nationality and classifying people into different groups in which group members receive distinct and typically unequal treatment and rights without rational justification" (Cotter, 2006, p.10). An assessment of different definitions of discrimination, used in political and social sciences, reveals three common fundamentals: discrimination includes (1) a segregation of groups, (2) unfair treatment of the members of a certain groups and (3) a lack of objectively justified reasons for this unequal treatment (Peucker, 2008).

Ethnic discrimination communicates to individuals that they are being undervalued, because of their ethnic or racial grouping. Discriminatory actions also commune that one is dissimilar and therefore not part of the in-group (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998). Even though only some researchers have emphasized on ethnic discrimination as a risk feature, results from social psychological studies forecast that ethnic discrimination is a likely risk factor as it threatens the psychological welfare of the undergraduates and adults (Eccles, Wong & Peck, 2006). One of the most devastating outcomes of racial devaluation is the stereotype risk (Steele & Aronson, 1995). where a person's consciousness of society's negative stereotypes, regarding their social group, guides them to be nervous, making them engage in manners that confirm individual's stereotypes, mainly those pertaining to intellectual skills (Eccles, Wong & Peck, 2006).

Since the middle of the 1970s European Union has put great emphasis to address the issue of ethnic discrimination (Peucker, 2008). By adopting the Racial Equality Directive (RED) in 2000 European Union has identified two distinct dimensions of ethnic discrimination namely direct and indirect ethnic discriminations. "Direct ethnic discrimination shall be taken to occur where one person is treated less favorably than another is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation on grounds of racial or ethnic origin" (Art.2 (2a) RED), whereas "Indirect ethnic discrimination shall be taken to occur where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice would put persons of a racial or ethnic origin at a particular disadvantage compared with other persons, unless that provision, criterion or practice is objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary" (Art. 2 (2b) RED).

2.2. Ethnic discrimination and promotion practices

"Promotion is the upward reassignment of an individual in an organization's hierarchy, accompanied by increased responsibilities, enhanced status, and usually with increased income, though not always so" (Monappa & Saiyadain, 1996, p.234). An assessment of promotion practices in various books on personnel management and human resource management indicates that promotion holds a key value not only in the eyes of the employees but also in the eyes of the organization. Promotion helps in keeping the size of the work force up to the optimum level and help increase workforce flexibility. Moreover effective promotion practices in an organization increase employees' ambition to work and decreases dissatisfaction and disturbances among them (Geet & Deshpande, 2008; Monappa & Saiyadain, 1996; Flippo, 1984). Depending on the organization policies promotions can be of variety of type. Some organization uses multiple chain promotion, up or out promotion and dry promotions. Moreover, promotions are also granted on the basis of seniority or on the basis merit.

When firm select employees for job then they gave a form in which employee fill all their personal requirements so that, in the time of promotion HR department used that form which reveal their personal identity. On the basis of personal identity form they discriminate among employees in promotion which has adverse effect on the achievement of organizational goals. Discriminating employees on basis of their ethnicity holds adverse effects for the organization. This is especially true during times of promotion, because when an employee is favored for promotion over other employees due to his/her race, key factor like the employee's competency and loyalty to the organization are overlooked. This affects the organization on two facades. Firstly, an incompetent employee gets promoted to a higher position to a level of that employee's incompetence. Secondly, it decreases the motivation of other more competent and deserving employees. Both of which are highly detrimental to the overall performance of the employees as well as the organization. Settles, Buchanan and Yap (2010) studied on Race/ethnic discrimination and also evidence in promotion practices and performance evaluation. If an employee feels that organization ignore them on the basis of ethnic discrimination then employee motivation level decrease day by day and cannot perform their task well which is hindrance in the achievement of organizational goal. It is related to equity theory (Adams, 1969) which means that individual perception of unfair and fair division of resources or employees get motivation and satisfaction by the comparison of input (participation/contribution) and output (rewards). On the basis of this theory organization should distributed the rewards and promoted those employees who fulfilled the task on time and show well performance otherwise when a firm discriminates on the basis of race then it has negative effect on promotion practices and also harmful for the goal of the organization.

H1: There is insignificant effect of Ethnic discrimination on promotion practices.

2.3. Upward influence

Upward influence holds key significance in organizations as sub ordinates use it as a tool to influence their superiors in a formal organizational structure (Ringer & Boss, 2000). In literature, upward influence has been described as "getting one's way" (Kipnis, Schmidt & Wilkinson, 1980). Over the past few years upwards influence has emerged as a topic of prime importance and has gained importance in term of a research variable (Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988).

According to Kipnis et al. (1980) subordinates tend to persuade their superiors by using six different strategies, which includes reason, ingratiation, assertiveness, coalition, higher authority and bargaining. The first strategy of upward influence is reason, in which the subordinates try to influence their supervisor through logical arguments and reasons. This strategy is directly proportionate to the desires and purpose of subordinates (Waldera, 1988). The second strategy is ingratiation in which the subordinates try to acquire the good temper of their supervisor by using a flattery or friendly behavior (Kipnis & Vanderveer, 1971; Kipnis et al., 1980). The third strategy is assertiveness, in which employees use pressure and continuous insisting to gain favor from their supervisor. In this strategy subordinates have perfect control of the condition (Falbe & Yukl, 1992). The fourth strategy is coalition in which the subordinates persuade the superior to give them favor through support of majority of their team (Schilit, 1987a; 1987b). The fifth strategy of upward influence is higher authority by which subordinates try to convince their supervisor by using their links with the higher authority within organization. This strategy is used when all tactics or strategies of upward influencing have failed and supervisor opposes all endeavors which are made by subordinates (Maslyn et al., 1996; Waldron et al., 1993). The sixth strategy is bargaining by which subordinates try to influence their supervisors by exchanging both hidden and visible rewards (Waldron, Hunt & D'silva, 1993). This involves actual exchange of certain benefits between the two parties (subordinate and supervisor) (Kipnis et al, 1980) or a proposition to do so. However, the exchange or sacrifice in all cases is always voluntary (Ashakaul, 2003).

This study only focuses on the fifth and sixth strategies of upward influence, that are upward influence through higher authority and bargaining, as these were found to be most relevant in the study context.

2.4. Upward influence and promotion practices

In the past researchers studied that the effect of upward influences tactics on individual outcomes like remuneration, promotion practices and performance evaluation (Ferris & Judge, 1991; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988). Previous literature review specified that employees use different strategies of upward influence to get promotion, positive ranking and raise wage (Kipnis et al., 1980). Akhtar and Mahmood (2009) study a Tri-Prong variable examination of upward influence strategies. In prior literature review investigated the relationship between upward influence techniques with management, career advancement and promotion (Sakinah et al., 2011).

In literature review, when subordinates use upward influence then they receive positive outcomes such as promotions, salary increases and performance rating (Kipnis et al., 1980). Employees sometime use tactics of upward influences such as higher authority and bargaining for personal desire or success within the organization. Sometime subordinates use upward influence through power of higher management to get their success. On the other side, sometime they convince their superior through exchanging something which has value or agreement to get promotion. So it can be concluded that upward influence is closely related to promotion practices. Therefore hypothesize as

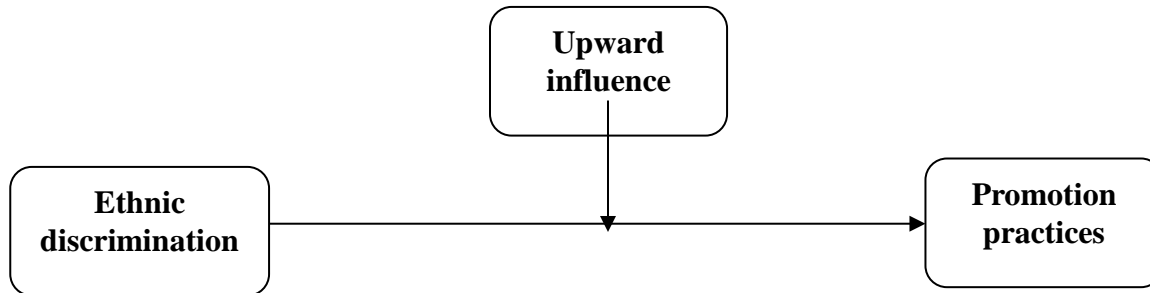
H2: There is significant effect of upward influence on promotion practices.

2.5. Moderating role of upward influence

As above mentioned that ethnic discrimination reduced or less the opportunities of promotion practices while upward influence strengthen the employee promotion. From previous literature the research indicated that upward influence effect the employee outcomes such as promotion (Ferris & Judge, 1991; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988). When supervisor discriminated among employees on the basis of racial which has harmful effect on promotion but when subordinate use extra pressure or power over superior and compel to give promotion. Hence upward influence has positive effect on promotion practices. Therefore it is concluded that upward influence moderate the relationship between ethnic discrimination and promotion practices because when ethnic discrimination and upward influence will combine then it enhance the promotion practices.

H3: Upward influence moderate the relationship between ethnic discrimination and promotion practices, such that the relationship will be weaker when upward influence is high.

3. Research Model



4. Methodology

4.1. Data collection

Being a diverse country with many ethnicities and races, ethnic discrimination is a serious issue in Pakistan and it reportedly exists in majority of the organizations at a variety of levels. Private sector organizations of Pakistan strive hard to keep such issues to a minimum. Unfortunately, such issues remain ever present and most frequently reported in public sector organizations of Pakistan, where minimum effort is made to take care of employee welfare. Taking this into context the present study emphasizes on public sector universities of Pakistan, which are more susceptible to discriminatory practices. For this purpose data was collected from the public sector universities of Khyber pakhtunkhwa. Using convenient sampling technique 300 self-administered close ended questionnaires were distributed out of which 202 were received back and were found usable, representing a response rate of 67%.

A cover letter was attached with the questionnaire, which clearly explained the purpose of research and reason for data collection. Moreover participants were ensured that their responses will remain anonymous and confidential. Moreover, data was collected from voluntarily participants only.

Descriptive statistics show that majority of the participant of this study were males (71%), with average ages from 21 to 30 years (41%). Their average education was post-graduation (50%) and they had been working with the organization for 1 to 5 years (44%).

4.2. Scales/ Measures Used

4.2.1. Ethnic discrimination

Ethnic discrimination was measured using a 12 item scales developed by McNeilly et al (1995). Sample item include “How often are you UNFAIRLY given the jobs that no one else wants to do?” A 5 points likert scale (1 = *once a week or more* and 5 = *never*) was used to anchor the responses for this variable. Cronbach alpha reliability for this variable was found to be 0.710.

4.2.2. Upward influence

Upward influence was measured using POIS, Form M developed by Kipnis and Schmidt (1988). Only 2 dimensions (Higher authority and bargaining) of upward influence were selected for this study. Upward influence through higher authority was measured through a 4 items scale. Sample item included “I obtain the informal support of higher management to back me up”.

Upward influence through bargaining was measured through a 5 items scale. Sample item included “I offer an exchange in which I will do something that my manager wants if he or she will do what I want.”

A 5 points likertscale (1 =*never* and 5 =*almost always*) was used to anchor the responses for this variable. Cronbach alpha reliability for this variable was found to be 0.938.

4.2.3. Promotion practices

Promotion practices were measured by 3 items response scale developed by Teseema and Soeters (2006). Sample item included “Presence of written and operational promotion policy”. A 5 points likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*) was used to anchor the responses for this variable. Cronbach alpha reliability for this variable was found to be 0.863.

5. Results

5.1. Correlation analysis

Results from the correlation analysis are presented in table 1, results revealed that ethnic discrimination was negatively correlated with promotion practices ($r = -0.349, p < 0.01$). On the other hand, upward influence also was found to be negatively correlated to promotion practices ($r = -0.281, p < 0.01$).

Table 1

Mean, Standard Deviation, Correlations and Reliabilities							
	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1 Ethnic Discrimination	2.841	0.879	(0.892)				
2 Upward Influence	2.770	1.164	0.546**	(0.938)			
3 Promotion Practices	3.200	0.985	-0.349**	-0.281**	(0.710)		

$n = 202$; **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); Crobach Alpha Reliabilities in the parenthesis

5.2. Regression Analysis

Moderated regression analysis was conducted to test the main effects as well as the moderating effects. Results of regression analysis are presented in table 2.

Main Effects

The results of the main effects are presented in step 2 of table 2. The results show that ethnic discrimination has a negative effect on promotion practices ($\beta = -0.290, p < 0.01$) thus, Hypothesis 1 is accepted.

Regression analysis further specified that upward influence has an insignificant effect on promotion practices ($\beta = -0.080, p = ns$), therefore hypothesis 2 is rejected.

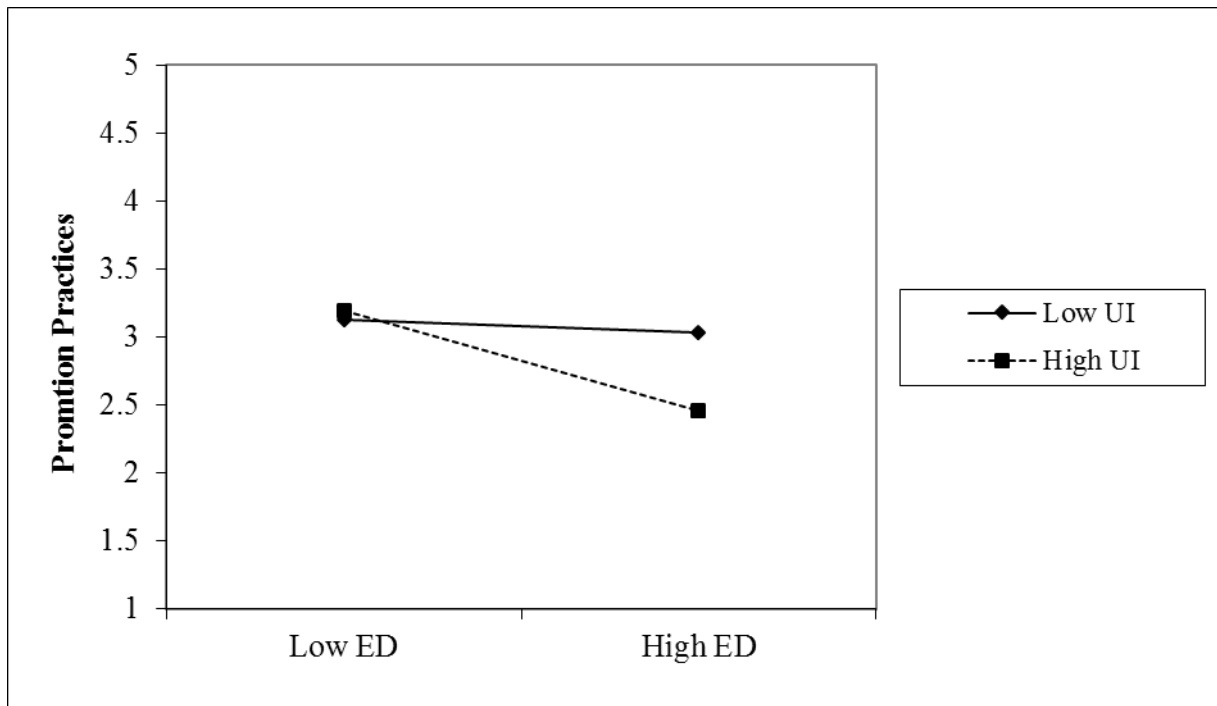
Moderated effects

Results of the moderated regression analysis are presented in step 3 of table 2. Statistical analysis indicates that when upward influence is taken as a moderator, it weakens the negative relationship of ethnic discrimination with promotion practices ($\beta = -0.155, p < 0.01$), leading to acceptance of hypothesis 3.

TABLE 2
Results for Main Effects and Moderation effect

Predictors	Promotion Practices		
	B	R ²	ΔR ²
Step 1			
Control variables		0.056	
Step 2			
ED	-0.290**		
UI	-0.080ns	0.144	0.088***
Step 3			
ED x UI	-0.155**	0.173	0.029**

n = 202; ED = Ethnic Discrimination; UI = Upward Influence;
 †=*p* < .06; *=*p* < .05; **=*p* < .01; ***=*p* < .001; ns = not significant.

FIGURE 1

ED = Ethnic Discrimination; UI = Upward Influence

6. Discussion

The findings of this study provide empirical support for majority of the proposed hypotheses. Ethnic discrimination was found to be negatively affecting promotion practices. From an organizational point of view, this is due the fact that when employees perceive that there is ethnic discrimination in an organization, they will develop a negative perception about promotion practices. It means that when organizations do ethnic discrimination among employees then the employee who feel that there is biasness and it has adverse effect on their promotion However, there is no previous studies can be found on this relationship.

The effect of tactics of upward influences on individual outcomes like promotion practices (Ferris & Judge, 1991; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988). But from statistical analysis was revealed that upward influence had insignificant relation with promotion practices because when an employee's used upward influence then it has negative effect on promotion practices. The cause of unpredicted outcome may be the existence of the phenomenon of social desirability; which can be described like the preference of respondents to answer the queries in a manner that will be viewed favorably by others. It points to the fact that in self-reports, respondents frequently present inappropriate answers on sensitive area in order to present them in the greatest viewed mode (Fisher, 1993). Therefore it may be probable that the respondents perceive the negative effect on their promotions. Because of this they provide inappropriate respond to the questions.

The statistical analysis was found that upward influence has a significant moderating effect on ethnic discrimination and promotion practices it means that when upward influence and ethnic discrimination are in combined form then it will enhanced the promotion practices.

7. Managerial Implications

This study concludes that when an organization discriminates among employees on the basis of ethnic/ racial discrimination then it has a seriously adverse effect on employees because of the perception they develop about their organization. As a response, they will use upward influence to get their success. So, managers must reduce the ethnic & racial discrimination in their organizations. Moreover, this form of discrimination may also have a negative effect on employee performance. Reducing the occurrence and intensity of discrimination may also help managers in raising the performance level of employees. If not discriminated, the tactical use of upward influence by employees may not surface.

8. Limitations and future research

The data was collected from the public sector universities of Khyber pakhtunkhwa. Future researchers are recommended to carry out the same research in other sectors. This research was based on a sample size of 202 respondents which were selected using convenient sampling techniques. To assure the generalizability of the research the future researchers are recommended to use a larger and more diverse sample. The current research examines the effect of ethnic discrimination on only 1 outcome. Future researchers are recommended to study the effect of ethnic discrimination on other variables such as job satisfaction, affective commitment, organization citizenship behavior, organizational commitment and grievances. This research was based on data collected from Pushtoon employees working in KPK. Future researchers are recommended to also collect data from Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan in order to include all 4 major ethnicities in Pakistan.

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