

Struggles of Non-Binary People in an Organizational Setting in Iceland

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Abstract : Introduction: This research identifies the main struggles of non-binary people in an organizational setting using the ZMET - method of in-depth interviews. The research was done in Iceland, a country that is repeatedly listed in the top countries for gender equality and found three main categories of non-binary struggles in organizations. These categories can be used to improve organizational non-binary inclusion. Aim: The main questions this paper will answer are: Which unique obstacles are non-binary people facing in their daily organizational life? Which organizational and individual measures help with more inclusion of non-binary people? How can organizational gender equality measures be made more inclusive of non-binary issues? Background: Even though gender equality is a much-researched topic, the struggles of non-binary people are often overlooked in gender equality research. Additionally, non-binary and transgender people are frequently researched together, even though their struggles can be very different. Research focused on non-binary people is, in many cases, done on a more structural or organizational level with quantitative data such as salary or position within an organization. This research focuses on the individual and their struggles with qualitative data to derive measures for non-binary inclusion and equality. Method: An adapted approach of the ZMET-Method (Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique) will be used, during which in-depth interviews are held with individuals, utilizing pictures as a metaphorical starting point to discuss their main thoughts and feelings on being non-binary in an organizational setting. Interviewees prepared five pictures, each representing one key thought or feeling about their organizational life. The interviewer then lets the interviewee describe each picture and asks probing questions to get a deeper understanding of each individual topic. This method helps with a mostly unbiased data collection process by only asking probing questions during the interview and not leading the interviewee in any certain direction. Results: This research has identified three main categories of struggles non-binary people are facing in an organizational setting: internal (personal) struggles, external struggles and structural struggles. Internal struggles refer to struggles that originate from the person themselves (e.g., struggles with their own identity). External struggles refer to struggles from the outside (e.g. harassment from coworkers, exclusion). Structural struggles refer to struggles that are built into the organizational policy or facilities (e.g. restrooms, gendered language). Conclusion: This study shows that there are many struggles for non-binary people in organizations and that even in countries that pride themselves on being progressive and having a high level of gender equality, there is still much to be done for non-binary inclusion. Implications for Organizations: Organizations that strive to improve the inclusion of all genders should pay attention to how their structures are built, how their training is conducted, and how their policies affect people of various genders. Simple changes like making restrooms gender-neutral and using neutral language in company communications are good examples of small structural steps for more inclusion.

Keywords : gender equality, non-binary, organizations, ZMET

Conference Title : ICGSDS 2024 : International Conference on Gender, Sexuality and Diversity Studies

Conference Location : Reykjavik, Iceland

Conference Dates : November 18-19, 2024