How an Economic Crisis Affects Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace

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Introduction

Over the past several decades, the world has witnessed a tremendous increase in cases of pandemics, which have not only led to an economic crisis but have also impacted diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace for African Americans. Some of the most recent pandemics that have had considerable impacts on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace include influenza and the COVID-19 pandemics. In particular, COVID-19, which is the most significant health problem that the world is currently confronting, has demonstrated that diversity, equity, and inclusivity are key to organizational sustainability. Diversity is key to developing and maintaining successful and economically thriving companies. However, due to the current pandemic, which has led to an economic crisis, firms have experienced a decline in diversity, equity, and inclusion. This study is of great importance because it improves our understanding of how pandemics that result in economic crises affect diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace for African Americans. A qualitative questionnaire is the best research strategy for this study, given its effectiveness in explaining, better understanding, and exploring the participants' views and experiences.

**Background of the Problem**

Throughout history, dangerous and rapidly spreading infections have had a massive impact on societies worldwide. New infections and re-emerging ones are not taking place at an unprecedented rate. According to the World Health Organization, the world has experienced a tremendous increase in the emergence of various illnesses and pandemics over the past several decades. These pandemics have always had profound and long-term impacts on the world economy throughout history. Some of the pandemics that have significantly affected our economies include influenza and the current COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, the 1918 influenza pandemic remains one of the most critical episodes in human history. Although it took place in 1918, this pandemic is one of the most devastating and deadly pandemics in the world history. According to Viboud & Lessler (2018), this pandemic was caused by H1N1 influenza. Although the influenza pandemic took place during World War II, it killed more people compared to the war itself.

As evident in the findings of O’Sullivan & Phillips (2019), the influenza pandemic, which lasted for about two years, resulted in the death of over 40 million individuals across the world, with over 650,000 being in the United States. This particular pandemic was so profound that it reduced the average life span, especially in the United States, by ten years. As reported by O’Sullivan & Phillips (2019), the influenza pandemic infected about 25% of all Americans. Nevertheless, it was more severe and fatal for individuals who were aged between 20 and 40 years. Also, African Americans were affected by this pandemic to a higher degree compared to the white counterparts. It is without any doubt that the influenza pandemic had a substantial impact on the economy, given that it was associated with increased mortality and unemployment rates. In 1957, the world experienced yet another pandemic, which resulted in the death of 116,000 individuals in the United States alone.

As O’Sullivan & Phillips (2019) opined, the 1957 influenza pandemic led to an economic crisis, something that impacted diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace for African Americans. In 2009, the H1N1 pandemic re-emerged, resulting in the death of about 12,500 in the United States. Today, the world is grappling with the Coronavirus pandemic. The COVID-19 remains one of the biggest health issues ever faced by the world since the great world war. Since its emergence in Wuhan, China, in late 2019, this pandemic has led to the death of close to 800,000 individuals across the world, with 185,000 deaths in the United States. This pandemic has also spread to almost every continent in the world and COVID-19 affects individuals of all ages (Chetty et al., 2020). However, it is more severe among older individuals, people with weakened immune systems, the poor, as well as minority groups like African Americans (Bali et al., 2020). The above pandemics have always had a severe impact on the economy. In fact, they have always led to an economic crisis, which has affected diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace for African Americans. In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic is currently causing an economic crisis in various parts of the globe. Although several countries are yet to contain this pandemic, it is already believed that economies like the United States will lose a minimum of 2.5% of the value of its global domestic product. These pandemics also result in an economic crisis by disrupting supply chains, transportation, and healthcare services alongside high economic costs (Kantamneni, 2020).

**Statement of the Problem**

Generally, global pandemics present a wide range of challenges to organizations. For instance, pandemics negatively impact the performance and profitability of organizations, which in turn causes an economic crisis. Employees are equally affected by pandemics in a wide range of ways. In particular, the current COVID-19 global pandemic has far-reaching impacts in the workplace that have increasingly made the workplace less diverse and inclusive. The COVID-19 pandemic has received much attention from the media and the global public attention due to its adverse impacts.

As a result of the pandemic, organizations have developed policies and adopted changes aimed at helping them to overcome the economic crisis brought about by the pandemic. Various researchers have focused more on finding effective ways to mitigate the spread of the infectious viral infection and develop an effective vaccine for the virus. However, little has been done to unearth how the economic crisis affects diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace for African Americans. Therefore, this study will fill a gap by focusing on identifying how economic crisis emaciating from pandemics affect diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace. Particularly, the study will fill a gap by focusing on how the COVID-19 pandemic affects diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace for African Americans. The pandemic impacts organizations by reducing the organization's ability to effectively support diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace. Some of the factors that cause the impacts of COVID-19 on workplace diversity, equity, and inclusion include financial factors and health factors (Peterson, 2020).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to identify the factors that lead to a decline in diversity, equity, and inclusion during an economic crisis in the United States. Additionally, the study aims at identifying ways to continue improving diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace, even during hard and challenging economic times. Pandemics like the COVID-19 have and continue to burden African Americans, given the lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion in our places of work (Abodunrin, Oloye, & Adesola, 2020).

**Significance of the Study**

This research will fill a gap in understanding by focusing on how an economic crisis affects diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace, with special reference to the COVID-19 pandemic and how it has affected diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace for African Americans (Kniffin et al., 2020). Even though diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace are such a serious issue and one that has continued to affect African Americans, little research has been done about it. Consequently, this study is unique since it addresses one of the most under-researched areas in social research and psychology (Filut & Carnes, 2020). The study will be of great importance, and its findings will offer much-needed insights into how the lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion during an economic crisis affects African Americans. Insights from this study should help in ensuring that organizations are making constant efforts to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion within the workplace, even during distracting times (Millett et al., 2020).

**Research Question**

The research question for this research study is how has the COVID-19 pandemic affected diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace for African Americans? The research question is qualitative because qualitative data will be used to analyze the impact of covid19 on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace for African Americans.

**Definition of Terms**

**Diversity**: This can be defined as recognizing, accepting, and appreciating our differences.

**Equity**: Equity refers to the idea of promoting fairness by treating people differently depending on their needs, situation, and other relevant factors.

**Inclusion**: Inclusion refers to bringing together people from diverse backgrounds without discrimination.

**Economic crisis**: An economic crisis refers to a sudden and always severe situation where assets lose their financial value, and various parts of the economy are upset.

**Pandemic**: A pandemic can be defined as an epidemic that occurs over a wide geographical area and affects a large number of people, thus causing severe problems.

**Research Design**

A qualitative research design will be the best methodology for addressing the research questions. The study will employ questionnaires to determine all the study participants' attitudes, perspectives, and opinions within the required time. Given this research design, some of the most relevant APA Code of Ethics would include protecting all the study participants' rights and the welfare of all the study participants, privacy and confidentiality, integrity, professional behavior, and professional competence.

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