

# 1 *A Relational Perspective on Religious Diversity at Work*

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## **Introduction**

This chapter offers a relational, multilevel perspective on theorizing and managing religious diversity at work. It explains that in order to understand and manage religious diversity in organizations, a holistic approach is needed which takes into account the macro-national, meso-organizational, and micro-individual level factors that are often interrelated and overlapping. At the macro-national level, the chapter highlights the implications of socio-cultural context, laws, and demography on approaches to religious diversity. At the organizational level, it takes into account issues such as organizational vision and culture, allocation of resources, and procedures. At the individual level, it considers issues of individual identity, intersectionality, and agency.

## **Religious Diversity at Work**

The term religious diversity refers to “distinct faith traditions and their internal variations found within a country” (Beckford, 2012, p. 111). In the context of workplace, it refers to diverse beliefs and faith practices of employees (Basinger, 2012; Furness & Gilligan, 2014). Mainly due to immigration and other demographic changes, the workforce in developed or industrialized countries is becoming more diverse in terms of religious and cultural backgrounds. Increasingly, policymakers and leaders around the globe are realizing the need to attend to the potential challenges and opportunities that religious diversity may offer to individuals, organizations, and communities. Often, political and socio-cultural attitudes infiltrate the organizational domain thus replicating societal stereotypes and othering of the minority communities. Within organizations, individuals may suffer from refined or blatant discrimination, which may affect their well-being and performance (Böhm et al., 2014; Day, 2005). At the same time, religious diversity

also has a business case, which means that if properly managed, it may add value to organizations in terms of skill, innovation, marketing, customer service, etc. Indeed, the workplace can and should provide a forum for inclusion and the overcoming of identity-based differences (Allport, 1979), thus improving employees' well-being and enabling a productive environment.

This chapter seeks to develop a relational, multilevel approach to religious diversity, taking into account not only an ethical and social responsibility rationale but also a business performance rationale. There is support for a relational perspective not only in the literature on management and organizations but also in fields as diverse as sociology, psychology, culture, and religion.

In the context of culture and psychology, Erez and Gati (2004) argue that culture comprises structural and dynamic characteristics that explain the interplay between various levels of culture. The structural dimension represents the nested structure of culture from the most macro level of a global culture, through national, organizational, and team cultures, and down to the individual level. The dynamic nature of culture conveys the top-down and bottom-up processes where one level affects changes in other levels. Specifically, Erez and Gati argue, globalization affects, through top-down processes, behavioral changes of members in various cultures. Reciprocally, behavioral changes at the individual level, through bottom-up processes, become shared behavioral norms and values, modifying the culture of teams, organizations, and societies.

The above theorization is similar to Giddens' (1984) structuration theory, which seeks to reconcile the long-standing divisions between two differing perspectives held by social theorists. Giddens argues that structuralists and functionalists have provided macro-level explanations of social behavior in terms of structural forces that limit individual's capability to do things in their own way, while studies focusing on the individual as the salient factor (hermeneutics, phenomenology) explain the social life by generally ignoring the influence of external entities. Giddens argues that both perspectives are interlinked, in that social life is neither simply a micro-level activity nor can it be studied by purely macro-level approaches. He refers to this balancing of agency and structure as the duality of structure.

In a similar fashion, theorizations about religion or secularism are based on three levels (Tschannen, 1991), i.e., social differentiation at

the macro-level, the decline or contested role of religion in organizations at the meso-level, and differences in levels of practice, belief, or affiliation at the micro-level. More often than not, influences, practices, and perceptions from one level permeate into other levels, thus creating a multi-layered and interconnected phenomenon. Next, a detailed discussion on each level of analysis is offered.

### *Macro-level*

Globalization and immigration have an important role in shaping religious and racial diversity in societies and workplaces (Dolansky & Alon, 2008). Accordingly, religion has an important role in both public and private sector organizations. The role of religion in employment and other domains of life has been a topic of numerous studies and debates. Durkheim (1964) suggested that the social division of labor and the resulting social differentiation would lead to the separation of religious and secular realms. He posited that gradually the collective conscience generated by religious participation would erode, and the functions performed by religion would be taken over by secular institutions, such as the nation-state, education system, and industry (Wallwork, 1984). Weber (1958) argued that the increasing dominance of instrumental rationality in economic and political institutions would eventually enable the eclipse of religious reason. Marx saw religion a repressive, ideological system for the justification and perpetuation of class domination, arguing that with the advancement of class-consciousness and materialism, religion would disappear (McKinnon, 2005).

Despite the ascendancy of secularism in recent centuries and the corresponding church-state separation, at least some of the mechanisms proposed by secularization theorists seem to remain obscure, and the evidence in practice is somewhat sketchy. For example, indicators of secularization (such as faith-based regulations, provisions, or norms) may be high in some modern societies, e.g. in Western Europe, but lower in others such as the USA. Similarly, some countries that are far less developed than the Western industrial democracies are more irreligious, e.g., the Czech Republic and Estonia (Pew Research Center, 2012). Berger (1967) acknowledges that we live in an age of exuberant religiosity, not secularization. Indeed, some social scientists have been proposing the religious economy model, taking into account the influence of religion in everyday life including work and beyond.

Scholars have identified the influence of church-state institutions on secular institutions across societies (Roccas & Schwartz, 1997). Political mobilization on the basis of religion is often triggered by the efforts of political elites to extend governmental authority into domains previously organized by religious organizations. Indeed, state regulation or penetration into areas once dominated by religion has, historically, provoked conflict and contentions (Knill & Preidel 2015; Koterski, 2011).

In their discussion of Religious Market Theory, Stark and Bainbridge (1985) argue that there will always be a demand for religion, and when real rewards are not available, people turn to religion for metaphysical rewards, such as promises of paradise. Stark and Bainbridge suggest that religion in several countries across Europe is declining because of domination of one religion, i.e., Christianity comprising Catholic and Protestant traditions. They argue that a greater variety of religion may result in an improvement in the services that religions offer and in turn may lead to greater religiosity.

The economics of religion uses socioeconomic theory to explain the religious behavior patterns of individuals, groups, and communities and the social consequences of such patterns. An example of religious behavior patterns is Adam Smith's analysis of the effect of competition and government regulation of religion on the quantity and quality of religious services (Anderson, 1988). An example of social consequences is Max Weber's (1958) thesis that the Protestant ethic promoted the rise of capitalism.

The economics of religion implies that religion will be more vibrant where it is less regulated and hence more competitive. However, Chaves and Cann (1992) argue that the hypothesis is weakened by the use of religious pluralism as a proxy measure for the extent to which the religious market is subsidized or regulated. In their study on the regulation of religious markets in 18 Western democracies, the authors provide strong support for the connection between religious competitiveness and vitality. Their study shows that the relationship between subsidized religion and religious participation holds in both Protestant and Catholic countries, and its explanatory power is far superior to that of religious pluralism alone.

From an economic and labor market perspective, forces for or opposed to certain or all religions can also influence employability and equal opportunity. Indeed, it is important to consider the negative

impact that social and institutional perceptions and stereotyping may have upon individual employability and expected performance (Ghumman & Jackson, 2010). Religious discrimination refers to those prejudiced behaviors that are experienced by employees on the grounds of their religious belief, including stereotypes and assumptions, such as those of being fanatics, barbaric, terrorists, followers of demon and evil, and oppressors of women (Ghumman & Jackson, 2010). The issue encompasses the concern that employees may be ridiculed, discriminated against, or segregated on the basis of their religious identity or practices (Armitage, 2007). The complexity of stereotyping in the workplace confirms the need to tackle this issue adopting a multilevel approach (Syed & Kramar, 2009).

In terms of the overlapping and inter-related nature of the multiple levels, the macro-level influence of social dimensions of stigma on individual identity at the micro-level is crucial, given that such influences can change through decades and generations of interventions (Beatty & Kirby, 2006). With a few exceptions where markers are obvious, such as the kippah and hijab, religion may be generally categorized among invisible yet stigmatized dimensions of diversity. At the meso-level, the consequences of social stigma may include increased stereotyping and levels of stress and anxiety, difficulties in terms of employment and career progression, isolation, and increased levels of labor turnover (Clair et al., 2005). The neglect of such issues may reinforce interpersonal discrimination and frictions in the workplace, having important costs such as the loss of talent due to disengagement and employee turnover (Muñoz & Thomas, 2006).

Religious stereotypes continue to exist and continue to affect people's behaviors and attitudes. For example, Catholic individuals may be stereotyped as being homophobic. Adverse stereotypes may also exist against other religions, e.g., Jews may be perceived as hoarders, which may be explained by their history. Islam is arguably the strongest religious stereotype; perhaps most commonly discriminated against in recent years, especially since the 9/11 terror attacks in America. Islam currently suffers from a negative reputation as being a religion of hatred, violence, and women's oppression. This prejudice, hatred, or fear of Muslims or of ethnic groups perceived to be Muslim may be referred to as "Islamophobia." Islamophobia is the fear or dread of Islam or Muslims (Abbas, 2004). There are many stereotypes about Muslims, e.g., commonly held assumption that all Muslims are

intolerant or violent. The media can be accused of Islamophobia and antisemitism as it is a large source of information that can spread the stereotype and discrimination worldwide.

Also it is important to consider the historical and colonial influences on religious and sectarian divisions and vilifications. It is, for example, a fact that antisemitism was exported to parts of Asia, Africa, and Latin American as a result of deeply anti-Jewish prejudices of British, Spanish, Portuguese, and other colonial powers. The British policies of divide and rule can also be used to explain the Hindu-Muslim communal violence and hatred during and after the British Raj in South Asia. Similarly, the usual representations of Muslims in media and academic scholarship ignore their internal heterogeneity, and at times misleading binaries such as Sunni vs. Shia are invoked, ignoring or obfuscating the fact that from South Asia to Middle East and from Europe to North America, almost all incidents of Islamist terrorism are the handiwork of Salafi (Wahhabi) and Deobandi militants who have spared no community including Sunni, Shia, Christian, Jew, and atheist from their violence.

Cross-nationally, the treatment of people with different religious beliefs or values varies dramatically. The perpetrator of faith-based discrimination in one country may be the sufferer in another country. Accordingly, it is a challenge for organizations as well as governments to stop discrimination or harassment and overcome adverse stereotypes to develop a productive and harmonious workforce.

Legislation is a common intervention used by countries to address faith based and other forms of discrimination. The number of lawsuits concerning religious discrimination is increasing exponentially as employees believe that they cannot express or practice their religion freely in their workplace (Borstorff & Arlington, 2011). For example, in the UK, the Equality Act 2010 protects individuals from being discriminated against, harassed, or victimized due to their religious beliefs or rational beliefs (EDF, 2010). However, while members of all religions are protected by the Equality Act 2010, there are still reports of religious discrimination and stereotyping.

In the USA, the federal law agency, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), has created guidelines for religious expression and accommodation at work. It has provided recommendations on how to deal with religious expression in a correct manner and how to avoid discrimination against people's religion (Bell, 2011).

However, the decision to promote religious diversity in the workplace may be conflictive given that the historic complexity of patriarchal norms underpinning certain religious practices may result in indirect, direct, and perceived hostilities towards other disadvantaged groups such as women, LGBT individuals, and people of color (Whitman & Bidell, 2014).

### *Meso-level*

The macro-societal perceptions and attitudes of religion also permeate into the organizational space. For example, based on her study of the impact of religion and ethnicity on employment and earnings in the UK, Lindley (2002) examines whether religious divisions have a greater impact on employment and earnings than being a member of a particular ethnic group. She notes that using conventional ethnic group classifications does not capture important differences within nationalities, e.g., between Indian Sikhs and Hindus, as well as between Muslims and the other religious groups. However, after controlling for religion, substantial ethnic labor market disadvantage is still apparent. Lindley's study indicates a substantial disadvantage to Muslims, relative to all other non-whites, which can be at least partially described as "pure Islamic penalty," i.e., faith-based discrimination.

A number of institutional interventions, regulations and guidelines in the shape of labor laws and business guidelines shape the way religious diversity is treated and managed in the workplace, for example, the extent to which religious discrimination is even acknowledged in employment regulations and the mechanism for redress.

In several countries, employers are legally required to accommodate religious expression in the workplace. Indeed workers expect more from their job than just a salary, e.g., freedom to express and practice their cultural and faith identity (Kelly, 2008). Moreover, managers who are able to understand and accommodate diverse religions and beliefs have the ability to form a motivated and diverse workforce. Indeed, some religions differ in their dietary needs, worship, and clothing appearance. For example, Muslims are forbidden to eat pork and to drink alcohol, whereas some practicing Jews may not eat anything that is not kosher (XpertHR, 2014).

Reasonable accommodation may be defined as a "mechanism of response by employers to employees' request for flexibility in relation

to their religious practices” (Beaman, 2012, p. 2). This constitutes a legal duty in the USA and Canada, whilst in the UK the Equality Act 2010 does not impose a similar legal duty apart from the case of disability, which warrants reasonable adjustment (Kumra & Manfredi, 2012). The key areas to cover for accommodating religious practices in the workplace may include time of prayers, diet, and fasting, holy festivals, and dress (CMI (Chartered Management Institute), 2012).

A survey in the UK has shown that managers usually tend to hire workers with similar characteristic backgrounds to their own (Roberts, 2014). This may lead to a decrease in hiring talented workers of different religious backgrounds, which is a lose-lose situation, not only for the diverse workers but also for the employer.

Religious diversity at work may also pose a dilemma, such as the extent to which employers can allow employees’ needs of religious expression without disregarding other stakeholders’ interests (Adams, 2012). For example, proselytizing (tabligh or dawa in Arabic) in the workplace may be perceived as harassment and disparate treatment by other religious and atheist employees (Ghumman et al., 2013; Olasky 2003). Traditionally, discussing religion in the workplace has been considered to be a taboo (Morgan, 2005). However, with a diverse workforce, there is no escaping this topic.

In the UK context, a British Airways (BA) employee, Nadia Eweida, was dismissed from her job for wearing a Christian cross on a necklace (Newcombe, 2013). It took almost seven years for Eweida to have the dismissal revoked. In the aftermath of this case, BA revised their dress code by allowing all employees to reveal any religious symbols or jewelry on their uniform (Bowcot, 2013). However, religion is still considered one of the most sensitive topics to discuss openly in the workplace (Newcombe, 2013).

In contrast, there are cases where it is considered acceptable for employers to take a stand on official uniform if it is supported by a strong reason. An example of this is the case of a National Health Service (NHS) nurse, Sherly Chaplin, who wanted to wear crosses as dangling earrings. However, the case was dismissed as NHS policies prohibit any kind of jewelry, due to risks of infection (Brown, 2013).

In the USA, the EEOC has supported several cases against religious discrimination. For example, one of the cases discussed was how two employees of telecommunications company American Telephone & Telegraph (AT&T) were unlawfully dismissed for attending the



Convention of Jehovah's Witnesses, a three-day course related to their religion. The two workers had attended the convention in previous years in the same company. They were denied permission for leave even after submitting an application six months in advance; they were suspended and later on discharged for attending the function (Bell, 2011).

### *Micro-level*

Scholars suggest that the best way to deal with religious diversity is to develop a nuanced understanding of faith, the variety of individual practice, and how faith intersects with other forms of individual identity (Banton, 2011). Employers ought to take into account the heterogeneity of their employees and allow flexibility to accommodate certain religious needs. For example, a Muslim worker who fasts in the month of Ramadan from dawn to sundown may be relieved an hour earlier in exchange for work during their lunch break (Mooney, 2013).

Also it is important to consider individual agency and discretion in believing in and practicing or not practicing a faith. While some choices may not be readily available given the restrictions on women and LGBT individuals in conservative faith-based communities, in most industrialized countries, a greater level of individual freedom and choice is available. Thus, bracketing all people of a certain faith into one category may not be advisable. Similarly the visible expression or practice of faith, e.g., kippah or hijab, may reveal the religious identity of the individual, making her or him vulnerable to discrimination.

Also it is important to examine and highlight examples of success, i.e., members of diverse faith and minority ethnic groups including women who use their agency, unique skills and coping strategies to overcome the multilevel challenges in the way of their careers.

It is not only the people of faith or minority faith who may face discrimination or harassment at work; atheists, too, may be victims due to their non-belief. In faith-dominated societies, attitudes towards non-believers or atheists are usually negative. According to one estimate, 85% of people in the USA are part of a religious group, leaving the remainder as non-believers (Bell, 2011). Atheists may be seen as a small minority in contrast to religious people, and be recipients of negative attitudes (Cragun et al., 2012). Workers who identify themselves as atheists may have issues with their employers or coworkers who are considered to be somewhat religious, as it immediately creates issues

of judgment, as atheists not only have no religion, but also doubt the existence of “God” (Cragun et al., 2012). Similar challenges may also arise between other groups. For example, a worker in HP (Hewlett Packard, a multinational information technology firm) filed a lawsuit against the firm where he alleged that it targeted Christian workers to forcefully accept homosexuality by displaying related posters. He stated that the firm had been treating him differently as they had not accommodated his beliefs in a reasonable manner (Bell, 2011).

In terms of intersectionality, it is important to consider that persons of religion, like all other persons, have multiple and intersecting identities. Often religion is intertwined with ethnicity, thus making it difficult neatly to differentiate religion-based tensions from ethnic tensions, as is the case for Jews, whose identities can be religious or non-religious (Hecht & Faulkner, 2000). Ethnicity interacts with religion, particularly in contexts where the majority ethnic group of the population shares the same religious background.

There is also the issue of how religion intersects with gender or/and class, thus adding up to the complex and multilayered nature of discrimination and intolerance in the society and the workplace. For example, a blue-collar Muslim worker may be relatively more drained of energy during fasting in Ramadan than one who works in an office (Mooney, 2013).

Bender et al. (2012) highlight the important of considering religious self-constitution as a relational and embodied process. Such a consideration helps in decentering the emphasis on belief in the commonly used category of the religious self, and recenters it on an approach that studies the self as an embodied process contextualized in ongoing social relations. Bender et al.’s study suggests that there is a need to consider multiple dimensions of the embodied space in which religious selves develop: the importance of collective practice, the relation to the body, and the engagement with the material environment.

### **Country Example: Religious Diversity in the UK**

The UK has “one of the most religiously diverse populations in the European Union” (Purdam et al., 2007, p. 147). According to 2011 census, the following is the faith-wise break-up of the country’s population: Christianity (59.5%), Islam (4.4%), and Hinduism (1.3%). Moreover, 25.7% indicated that they had no religious belief, whereas 7.2% did

not state their religion or did not respond. A significant change that the country has experienced is an increase in the population reporting no religion, a decrease in percentage of Christians and an increase in percentage of Muslims (ONS (Office for National Statistics), 2012). An awareness of current demographics is important to understand the complexity involved in accommodating religious practices in the workplace (Farnham, 2010).

Before the Equality Act 2010, the main legislation in the field was the Employment Equality (Religion and Belief) Regulations 2003 (CMI (Chartered Management Institute), 2012). The types of discrimination currently covered by the Equality Act 2010 are direct and indirect discrimination, perception discrimination, harassment and harassment by a third party, and victimization (ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service), 2011).

The British media has often been accused of Muslim activists and community groups of persistent negative coverage, by generically and stereotypically associating acts of violence and intolerance with all Muslims. Indeed, ultra-nationalist right-wing parties and media persons have contributed to the rise of Islamophobia in the country, which has been further exacerbated by the ongoing violence and wars in the Middle East.

Religion as a legally protected characteristic also includes a lack of religion, as well as any type of religious affiliation that follows a clear structure and belief system. The Equality Act covers “any religious or philosophical belief or lack of such belief,” involving at the same time the requirement that the belief must be a “weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behavior” (ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service), 2011, p. 7; Equality Act, 2010). In line with its approach to positive action, to counteract the negative effects of discrimination and remedy previous inequalities, the Act provides the possibility to encourage particular religions that are underrepresented in certain roles or organizations, but without violating merit (ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service), 2011). Additionally, an exception for lawful disparate treatment is given to religious organizations such as churches that need employees or clergy to perform religious functions (Ghumman et al., 2013).

Weller (2011) notes that since 2003, the number of Employment Tribunal cases has increased, which may represent an increase in the number of discriminatory episodes as well as a “greater awareness of

potential legal remedies” (p. 7). Borstorff and Arlington (2011) assert that these figures can be seen as indicating that employers are failing to meet employees’ religious needs.

According to a study commissioned by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (Equality and Human Right Commission (EHRC), 2010), the most significant employment gap in the UK is represented by the low rates of employment of Muslims in comparison with the reference group, i.e., white Christian men. Further, the pay gap experienced by Muslim men is 17% and 24% for Muslim and Sikh women in comparison with the reference group (Equality and Human Right Commission (EHRC), 2010). This indicates the impact of intersection of gender and religion. Moreover, an analysis of the census data reveals that despite an increased level of education over the 10 years (2001–11), Muslims have a higher rate of unemployment than the average. The analysis notes that Muslims face a double penalty – racial and religious discrimination – in entering the labor market. At the macro-level, the report also takes into account the social deprivation, e.g., the high Muslim proportion of the prison population (13%) and the proportion of Muslims in social housing (28%) (Ridley, 2015). Muslim women, in particular those of Pakistani and Bangladeshi descent, are most disadvantaged in terms of highest unemployment rates and gender pay gaps in the UK.

As earlier mentioned, the case of Nadia Eweida in British Airways highlights the complexity of religious discrimination in the workplace. The case reached the Employment Appeal Tribunal (EAT) in 2008. Eweida claimed that she was discriminated against on the basis of her religion when she was disciplined due to wearing a cross on a necklace (Dineley, 2009). The EAT ruled that the case was not a genuine case of religious discrimination due to the lack of evidence of group disadvantage (Javaid, 2008). However, since then British Airways changed its uniform policy to allow employees wear religious symbols (Dineley, 2009). Eweida finally won her case in the European Court of Human Rights due to the violation of the Article 9 of the European Convention of Human Rights (Eweida and Others v. The United Kingdom, 2013) (Newcombe, 2013).

Another example of discrimination in the workplace is the case of NIC Hygiene Ltd. in Bradford. It was the first case won by an employee under the religious discrimination legislation of 2003 (Hope, 2005). Mr Khan, a cleaner for NIC Hygiene Ltd. in Bradford, asked his

employer if he could use his 25-day annual holiday entitlement, and another week's unpaid leave, to make an Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca. When his employer did not respond to his request, his manager told him he should assume he could go. However, on his return to work, he was suspended and subsequently dismissed. He brought claims of unfair dismissal and religious discrimination. A Leeds employment tribunal upheld Khan's claims and awarded him compensation in the region of GBP 10,000 (Personnel Today, 2005).

In terms of examples of best practice, an organization that shows commitment to faith diversity in the workplace is Sodexo UK and Ireland, a multinational corporation of food services. The company was given an award in 2010 by the Employers Forum on Belief (Sodexo, 2010). The company raises awareness within the workplace by, for example, distributing information about festivals relating to different religions. Additionally, in its marketing and promotion packs, the company provides information about restaurants that provide vegetarian and Halal menus (ENEI (Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion), 2010a).

Another important example of effective religious diversity management is the London Borough of Lambeth. The organization implemented the Equality Exchange Programme to promote an open organizational environment of debate on diverse religions in the workplace. Furthermore, to increase employees' awareness of diverse faiths, the organization launched the Multi Faith Forum and also provided multi-faith prayer rooms. Through such provisions, the organization seeks to develop an inclusive organizational culture (ENEI (Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion), 2010b; Lambeth, 2013).

### **Brief Example: Pakistan**

A similar example of multilevel influences on religious diversity can be seen in the form of Pakistan. The country's very genesis in 1947 was rooted in a communal struggle by Muslims of the Indian Subcontinent to have a separate homeland. At the legal level, the constitution declares Pakistan as an Islamic Republic and declares that no laws shall be made contravening the fundamental teachings of the Quran and the Hadith (traditions of Prophet Muhammad). While the constitution ensures equality, it also discriminates against non-Muslims. For example, no non-Muslim can become a president or prime minister.

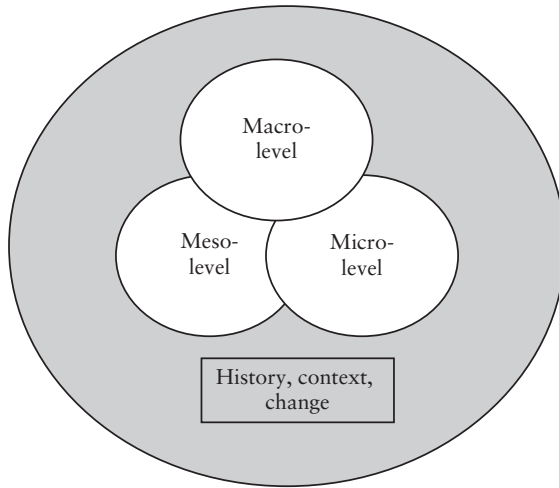
In 1974, the Pakistan parliament, through its Second Amendment, declared the Ahmadi sect to be non-Muslims, relegating them to a religious minority, a step that was followed by numerous anti-Ahmadi laws and regulations in subsequent years. It is not unusual in Pakistani markets and even offices to come across posters and literature blatantly insulting and discriminating against Ahmadis and their beliefs.

## Discussion

The chapter has treated religious diversity at work at multiple, relational levels (Syed & Özbilgin, 2009), i.e., in the context of society, organization, and individual identity. It has taken into account the complexities presented by religion, gender, class, and other dimensions of individual identity, and their continuous interplay with various macro-societal and meso-organizational level variables. The approach is consistent with the previous studies that have highlighted the need to develop a contextual and relational understanding of diversity and management, e.g., Syed's (2009) contextual approach to diversity management and Tsui's (2004) perspective on indigenous research.

The chapter has highlighted the need to focus on a range of imagined and real connections and disconnections and levels of choice that breach national and ethnic boundaries (Shukla, 2001). A multilevel approach (Figure 1.1) may enable us to think about the wider networks of material and symbolic relations within, and through which, equality, diversity, and inclusion may be theorized, aspired to, perceived, and experienced in particular locales.

Effective religious diversity management may also help in improving organizational reputation in the labor market and wider society, leading to enhanced employee attraction and retention, as well as increased support from other stakeholders (ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service), 2005). The reduction of the risk of cases being taken to a court of law can imply an additional financial benefit for organizations. Overall, these factors can have a knock-on effect of improving levels of performance and profitability (CMI (Chartered Management Institute), 2012). Additionally, diversity is linked with performance through productivity and innovation in the sense that it can provide market expansion and a more diverse customer and partnership pipeline (Kamenou & Syed, 2012).



**Figure 1.1** A relational perspective on religious diversity at work

The development of organizational strategies that can contribute to effective management of religious diversity is important, given that direct or indirect discrimination can negatively affect employees' performance (CMI (Chartered Management Institute), 2012). While the business case for religious diversity encompasses the improvement and enhancement of employee morale (Paludi et al., 2011) in terms of levels of engagement, commitment, and motivation of the workforce, it is important to also take into account the social justice and ethical aspects of diversity and equality. Prevention strategies to avoid religious discrimination may include training programs for managers and employees to increase awareness and deal with stereotypes, and counseling services for past victims of discrimination or harassment (EEOC (US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission), 2008). Diversity policies and procedures may be monitored to audit their effectiveness over time and detect inconsistencies in practice through tools such as climate surveys (Paludi et al., 2011).

Consultation with relevant faith groups and other stakeholders on the best ways to respond to employees' requests for accommodation may be useful to reduce bias among managers and employees that can exist due to assumptions and stereotypes (EEOC (US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission), 2008).

At the meso-level, organizations may resort to positive action to beat adverse faith-based stereotypes. At the macro-level, governments and business associations may encourage “positive action” to implement legally permissible measures designed to counteract the effects of past discrimination. Such interventions may be used to encourage people within a minority group to take opportunities available to them, such as training, work experience schemes, or applying for particular job roles. This can only be done if the minority group has been under-represented in a certain area of employment, yet at the same time the treatment should be on merit, within the remit of national legislation. At the micro-individual level, organizations may enable the voice and participation of diverse employees in decisions affecting their work and employment. Managers may carefully decide about possible religious accommodations, taking into account the heterogeneity of individual belief, practice, and intersectionality. As a matter of fact, employees are not necessarily entitled to accommodations of their choice and the accommodation does not have to be cost-free to the employee. Although managers have the final say on allowing for accommodations, it is important to adhere to their ethical and legal obligations, and also exercise benevolence where possible.

In order for organizations effectively to manage and tackle discrimination in the workplace, it is important to consider and moderate generalized and stereotypical views about religion. The best method of doing this is through training. Training can also be used by the organization to show how seriously discrimination is taken and that it will not be tolerated. Unfortunately, religious discrimination and generalizations happen on a daily basis at multiple levels. While it may not be possible fully to overcome this discrimination, it is important that organizations do whatever they can to create an inclusive and productive workplace.

Although there is a greater interest among organizations in addressing employees’ religious needs in the workplace, the increasing number of religious discrimination claims represents a challenge for not only for employers but also for governments and community groups (Weller, 2011). Informal practices and accommodations may require formalization, with the risk of raising complex issues and challenges for employers and managers (Ghumman et al., 2013).

Employees’ freedom to express and openly live their personal faith is not something that is straightforward in the workplace. Organizations,



employers, and managers, as well as government policy makers and community groups need to understand the benefits both to individuals and the business of promoting a culture of inclusion, integration, trust, and mutual respect. Thus, an awareness of or compliance with legislation and regulations in the field is not sufficient to ensure the effective management of religious diversity in organizations (CMI (Chartered Management Institute), 2012). Equality of opportunities and the organizational climate need to be constantly assessed, given that effectively managing religious diversity in the workplace is not only a matter of harnessing business benefit but also an ethical obligation. In addition to legal compliance, organizations can be positive action oriented and commit to religious diversity in their overall strategy. Furthermore, it is important to have an open communication network to allow religious freedom and dialogue at work (CIPD, 2013), thus moderating any stereotypes and misperceptions that might exist in domains outside the workplace.

### **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to Al-Busaidi, Hind, and Panebianco for their assistance in the literature review.

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