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## **Creativity Pressure Under Workplace Discrimination**

**Andreea Ștefan<sup>1</sup>, Andreea Marin-Pantelescu<sup>2</sup> and Gabriela Țigu<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1)2)3)</sup> *The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania.*

E-mail: andreea.stefan65@yahoo.com; E-mail: marin.andreea@com.ase.ro

E-mail: gabriela.tigu@ase.ro

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### **Abstract**

Is there any discrimination in the workplace? Research conducted by numerous authors (Ding, et al., 2019; Munro and Phillips, 2020; Tahir, 2020) indicates that it is. Also, discrimination affects employees' performance, innovation and creativity. Talking about creativity, it is broadly defined as an individual or group process that involves the production of results that are considered both new, original or useful and appropriate in a social context. This research aims to prove the pressure felt by employees when they feel discriminated from the workplace.

By applying quantitative research, our results highlighted the following: most employees feel discriminated on the basis of age, gender, social origin, political opinion and sexual orientation. Women between ages of 21 and 30 feel very discriminated in terms of development and promotion in their current job; and 11% of all respondents feel intimidated by their superiors. There is a direct and strong correlation between discrimination in the workplace and employee creativity, as evidenced by the application of the Pearson correlation coefficient to the undertaken research. Thus, the more discriminated they feel, the more employees will no longer use creativity to find innovative solutions for the company. Reducing discrimination in the workplace will have beneficial effects on employee innovation and creativity, as evidenced by our research.

**Keywords:** discrimination, creativity, creative performance, innovation, teamwork

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### **Introduction**

Starting from the effects of discrimination felt by employees, we analyzed, in this case, the impact on the creativity of employees from different work environments. Our research's goal is to indicate the impact on employee creativity affected by the various discriminations encountered every day. We think each of us has heard or even taken part in an act of discrimination. We know the impact of these actions, but we believe that we should be aware of the negative effects felt by both individuals and companies. Thus, the objects of this research aim at a brief presentation of the types of discrimination and an analysis, built on a quantitative and qualitative certification, meant to highlight the way in which creativity influences. We look for this research, first of all, to expose the economic and social impact, but most importantly, we are looking for helping to combat cases of discrimination.

The most common conflicts in the workplace are related to discrimination, misunderstandings and preferences; this classification has been quite controversial over the years, and scientists, through their work have managed to perfectly outline these boundaries. The antagonism between employees, has been proven by researchers, is represented by contradictions related to tasks and relationships. In the case of tasks, there are many disputes related to divergent opinions and perspectives that have an action point, the distribution of tasks, the company's policy and procedures.

It is known that these conflicts can have both negative and positive effects, delimited by the type of conflict. Conflict is very well associated with learning, creativity and innovation, characteristics that

engage employee performance. On the other hand, the conflict causes confusions, interpersonal tensions, because the emotional toil disrupts the accomplishment of the daily tasks. As we have argued this topic has been very controversial over the years, so some researchers believe that consecutive conflicts decrease employee's satisfaction and performance, on the other hand, more positively, it has been argued that this action stimulates employees to adapt and learn. to analyze the distributed tasks. The psychological aspects related to the emotional conflicts developed by the employees, namely: frustrations, tensions, personality conflicts, disagreements regarding personal principles, but also interpersonal traumas, are not beneficial for the company, because employees' efforts will focus on resolving personal conflicts, not solving daily tasks in the field of work (Transparency International, 2021). We need to delimit the concepts of conflict between tasks and that between relationships. Thus, relational conflict has an effect on many individual outcomes, such as performance, satisfaction, and creativity.

Discrimination is the most common conflict among both private and state-owned companies. Gender ideology is ubiquitous at every level and thus influences initiatives that shape gender relations and determine the division of labor in society. If the ideology operating in the organizational culture strengthens the company's patriarchy, it will result in the disadvantage of women by not recognizing their contributions and in turn will produce inequalities. Discrimination occurs in various forms, but the available literature lists a variety of discriminatory practices reported by women, in the case of employment, during working hours and most importantly during professional assessment and performance. Liberal feminists claim that the absence or improper implementation of gender-specific policies increases women's vulnerabilities to jobs in unequal regimes, but European literature states that women are more likely to be supported for professional endeavors. Although states claim to incorporate 'gender' into their legal framework, the outcome varies around the world: in Europe, South Asia, South Korea and Malawi. "Genre" as a relevant tool.

To continue our study, the next starting point is a quote from 1999, in which Einarsen defined aggression as: "when someone at work is systematically subjected to aggressive behavior from one or more colleagues or superiors over a long period of time" (Einarsen, et al., 2003). In this concept we can follow two levers, which will lead us in the same direction, namely, discrimination and harassment. Although there are well-established legal provisions in both criminal and civil law, these forms of violation of rights must be proven.

### **Review of the scientific literature**

The current workforce is becoming increasingly diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is the "last acceptable and remaining prejudice" (Asirvatham and Humphries-Kil, 2021) in modern societies and organizations. Thus, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender employees continue to face a variety of challenges. It is clear that traditional research in diversity management has focused limited attention on discrimination against sexual orientation. In fact, the subject was almost ignored. So far, very few researchers have examined this notion as a particular aspect of diversity management in the own workplace. Today, the changing nature of the workforce palette is indicated by the diversity of sexual orientation compared to what is widely considered a heterosexist. Employers, trade unions, human resources managers and public authorities can interpret this as a large-scale challenge that requires new implementations and compromise. Although race, ethnicity and gender are the most well-known types of discrimination, there are other forms that offer important implications, namely sexual orientation (Asirvatham and Humphries-Kil, 2021). Contemporary researchers of workplace discrimination have developed a substantial literature examining the effects of the workplace and racial and ethnic composition on organizational attachment. In general, previous research suggests that ethnic similarity with colleagues and managers promotes closer social relationships and increases organizational engagement. Starting from the perspective of organizational demography, the previous literature indicates that having the ability to develop intra-racial ties with colleagues tends to strengthen social ties and increase organizational attachment (Munro and Phillips, 2020). Thus, we can say that the higher the composition of the same breed, the lower the chances of a firm exit. In addition, as the proportion of colleagues of the same race decreases, profit increases, so that the level of satisfaction and creativity is higher in homogeneous groups than in inhomogeneous groups (Stainback and Irvin, 2012).

Employee rights are violated, even in large companies, in one case, an Amazon employee who had constant productivity for years had to cut hours when she learned that her father had cancer. At that moment, her supervisor told her, "When you fail to work 80 hours a week, it means you have a major weakness", (Asirvatham and Humphries-Kil, 2021) the employee said. A woman lost her pregnancy due to her work environment, she was forced to go on a business trip the day she returned to work. Several fathers said they left or intended to give up their current job because their bosses and colleagues pressured them to give up their time with their families. Thus, a study shows that 38% of employees reported being assaulted in the previous year and 84% experienced at least one assault at work, figures that worry us (Bereczki and Kárpáti, 2021).

In recent years, the development of the creative competence of fresh employees has evolved to become a key educational goal around the world due to its economic, social and personal benefits. Creativity in any field requires both generalized skills and specific to the field of activity, but also well-defined skills. In general, researchers synthesize and validate creativity along the four Ps: creative person, process, product, and place of activity (Bereczki and Kárpáti, 2021). Many researchers argue that creativity focuses on activities with a high degree of technological development because they shape and encourage higher-level thinking and stimulate creative processes (using imagination, modeling, aiming, being original, evaluating value). Technology-enhanced creative activities include developing ideas, establishing connections, creating and realizing, collaborating and communicating, and evaluating creative outcomes (Broshi-Chen, and Mansfeld, 2021). Other researchers see the role of digital technology in supporting creativity in connection with human-computer interaction. As we have argued, creativity is used in all fields, another conclusive example is related to the crises in the field of tourism, which are more and more common, and if we refer to the current situation, the pandemic has forced all areas of activity to resort to creativity for to save his company (Broshi-Chen and Mansfeld, 2021). Because creativity is a significant tool for expanding thinking and behavior and is at the heart of the innovation process, it seems appropriate to deal theoretically and applied to the tourism crisis. Innovation, although a vague notion, essentially results in a new and improved state of affairs. Thus, it increases productivity and improves competitiveness (Ding, et al., 2019).

The devastating impact of pandemic is one of the reasons why the limited profits made in recent decades in terms of gender equality risk being nullified (Ozeren, 2014). This is hindered by the failure and neglect of many countries to promote laws or address gender discrimination in response to the pandemic (Pelau, Ene and Pop, 2021). Corruption, sustained by the pandemic, is likely to worsen gender discrimination. Even in less critical times than this, some forms of corruption affected women in an unbalanced way (Pitafi, Liu and Cai, 2018; Pitafi, 2020). Recent reports have published concrete data on the impact of corruption and discrimination on women. In Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, recent surveys have shown that, in several countries, most believe that anti-corruption complaints made by men are more likely to be resolved than those made by women. (Pitot, et al., 2021). The impact of corruption on women has taken on global proportions, although some commitments have been made to combat this crime, these measures have many gaps and need improvement (Silvia, et al., 2020). The current risks indicated by COVID-19 and corruption, for gender equality require prompt and urgent action (Tahir, 2020). While commitments and promises are a good starting point, if they are not translated into concrete actions, they lose their veracity.

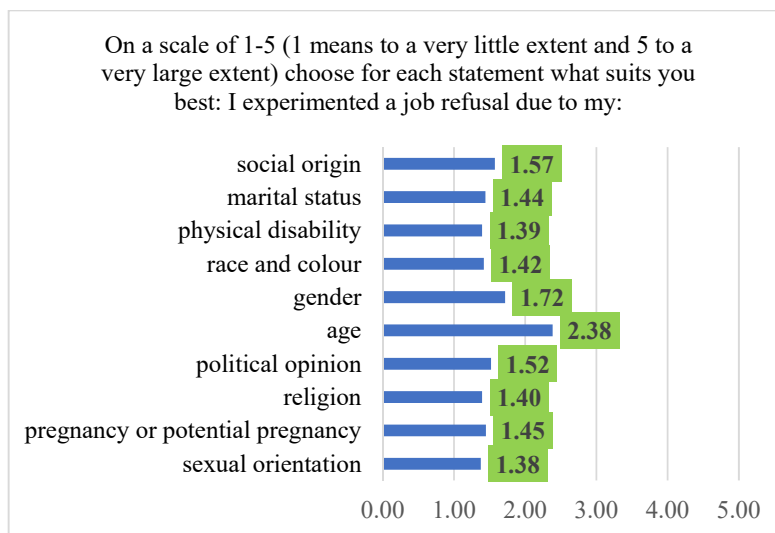
### **Research methodology**

In order to investigate discrimination in the workplace and its impact on employee creativity we administrated a research questionnaire with 26 closed questions, of which 4 demographic questions: gender, age, qualification and experience in the workplace. The demographics of the questionnaire were as follows: regarding gender 35.1% men, 62.4% women and 2.5% prefer not to say. Respondents age 20.5% up to 20, 53.7% between 21 and 30, 14.4% between 31 and 40, 8.2% between 41 and 50, 3.2% over 50. Regarding the level of studies, we had 36.1% bachelor's degree, 29.0% graduates, 25.7% master's degree, 9.2% Ph.D. The respondents work experience: 41.1% up to one-year work experience, 28.5% between 2-5 years, 9.9% with 5-10 years' work experience, 7.2% 10-15 years, 7.9% 15-20 years and 5.4% more than 20 years' experience in the workplace. A total of 404 questionnaires were completed which ensured the representativeness of the sample for a probability of 95% with an error of plus / minus 5% using the simple random sampling method. The questionnaire was administered

exclusively online through applications <https://www.surveio.com/survey>, the research being quantitative consisting exclusively of closed-ended questions. The questionnaire was administered between February 22, 2021 and March 19, 2021. The attitude scale used in our research was 5-step semantic differential (1 means to a very little extend and 5 to a very large extent).

**Results and discussion**

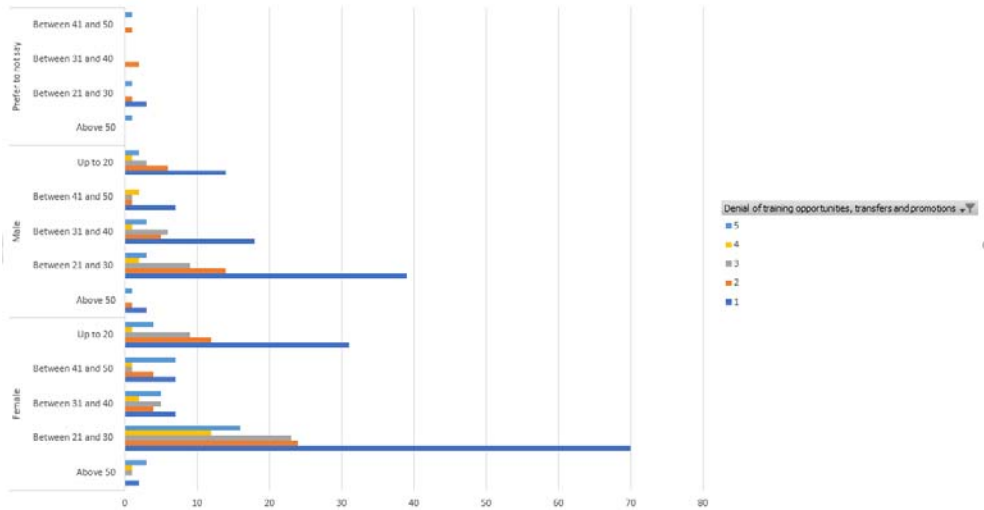
From the beginning, we wanted to see how the research respondents felt according to several characteristics, namely discriminated: social origin, marital status, physical disability, race and color, gender, age, political opinion, religion, pregnancy or potential pregnancy and sexual orientation. The results show us moderate scores for each characteristic, which demonstrates a positive, beneficial and comforting thing for the working environment in our country. Age was the most discriminatory factor with a score of 2.38 out of a maximum of 5. We can claim that in Romanian companies there is a discrimination based on age felt most strongly by employees at work. This is followed by gender-based discrimination in the workplace with a score of 1.72 out of 5. Discrimination between male and female has deep roots and is less attenuated nowadays. The perception that there are better paid men than women, men who predominantly hold management positions in companies before women is a specific thing to the working environment of companies in our country. The social origin and political opinion have scores close to 1.57 and 1.52, respectively, which highlights the importance of social levels in the organizational culture in Romania and the importance of the political environment that governs strategic areas of activity.



**Figure no. 1. The respondents' perception of discrimination in the workplace according to different criteria**

*Source: results of the authors' research*

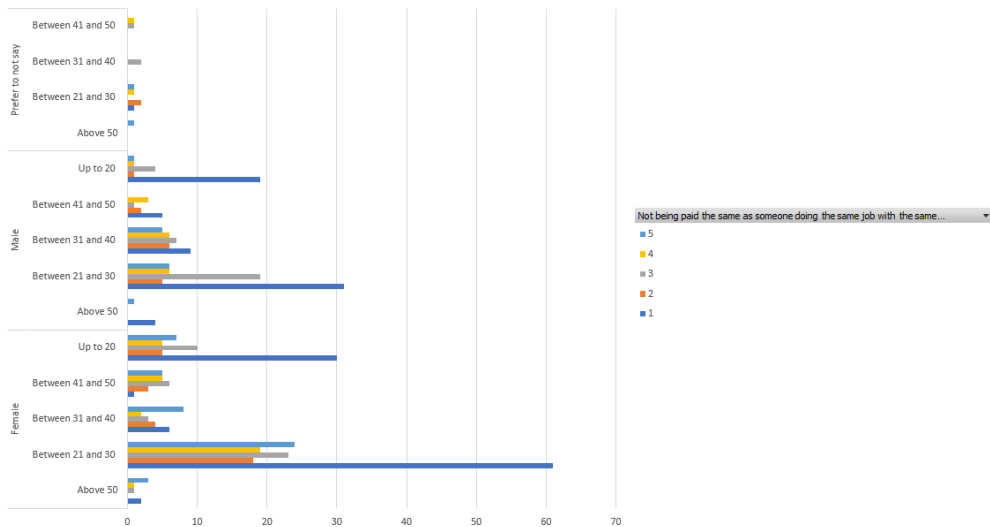
Another objective of our research was to analyze the degree of discrimination felt by respondents regarding: "Denial of training opportunities, transfers and promotions", "Not being paid the same as someone doing the same job with the same experience and qualifications", "Exclusion and isolation by coworkers", "Having information you need to do your job deliberately withheld", "Being given impossible tasks", "Being subjected to taunts or abuse", "Being humiliated by superiors and colleagues" and "Being intimidating or threatening by superiors". The first point chosen chronologically that we want to discuss is "Denial of training opportunities, transfers and promotions", the answers are indicated on a scale from one to five, where one assumes very little felt and five indicates a strong feeling. According to the results, women aged between 21 and 30 feels very discriminated in terms of the evolution at the current job, out of the total respondents 35 women felt very discriminated compared to 9 men, out of a total of 404 respondents.



**Figure no. 2. The respondents' perception of discrimination in the workplace according to Denial of training opportunities, transfers and promotions**  
 Source: results of the authors' research

Through the same question we wanted to highlight the people who feel the least discrimination, resulting that 117 female respondents did not feel this discrimination, the highest percentage is found in people aged 21 to 30, but the average age indicates that respondents are recently employed in companies and have also entered the labor market recently, without having the necessary experience.

The next criterion of discrimination was "Not being paid the same as someone doing the same job with the same experience and qualifications", 15% of all respondents consider that they felt more and more strongly this form of discrimination, of which the vast majority were of female sex. The highest percentage recorded, of 41.8%, did not feel this form of discrimination, the idea of a confidential salary, a global solution, we can say to combat discrimination, is to be pointed out. However, encouraging a confidential reputation does not combat discrimination, it is just a form of concealment and combating side effects.



**Figure no. 3. The respondents' perception of discrimination in the workplace according to Not being paid the same as someone doing the same job with the same experience and qualifications**  
 Source: results of the authors' research

Questions: "Exclusion and isolation by coworkers", "Having information you need to do your job deliberately withheld" and "Being given impossible tasks", as in the two cases specified above, the share of 50% is assigned to the first point, more precisely the respondents aged between 21 and 30 do not feel discriminated, and the gender ratio is predominant among women. Regarding the exclusion and isolation of people, the percentages are not significant, a cause being the pandemic, which brought many negative effects worldwide, we consider that it also brought certain disadvantages, namely reduced discrimination from this point of view, because all several companies have adopted work from home and daily team calls, so we believe it is a step forward in reducing discrimination and strengthening relationships between colleagues. "Having information, you need to do your job deliberately withheld", in this context only 7% of respondents feel that they do not have all the necessary information, but how we specified the current way of working adopted tends to strengthen communication in the company. Impossible tasks, presents a very deliberate topic in companies, 11% of respondents considered that they feel very disadvantaged by this aspect. The last three questions refer to abuse, humiliation and intimidation, being the most common and contentious forms of discrimination. According to the study, 11.1% of respondents feel intimidated by superiors. This form of discrimination is becoming more widespread, with all these facts being derogated from by the civil code, more and more superiors are resorting to these methods, and these can be validated following conclusive evidence. We can argue that all these actions have a negative effect on the creativity and performance of employees.

The next objective was to identify the link between discrimination in the workplace and employees' creativity (whether they feel involved in teamwork, whether their creative potential is affected by workplace conflicts, whether they are innovative under pressure from discriminatory attacks).

78% of respondents said that they are still involved in teamwork activities even if they feel discriminated against in the workplace. On the other hand, 22% of all respondents say they are no longer involved in teamwork due to discrimination in the workplace.

"I was no longer creative in finding solutions for the company" due to discrimination was supported by 26% of all respondents. On the other hand, 74% say they still found creative solutions for the company even if they felt discriminated against at work.

Out of the total respondents, 75.6% claim that they were innovative in solving tasks at work even if they felt discriminated and a percentage of 24.4% stated that they were no longer innovative and inventive at work in the cause of the discrimination they felt.

Regarding the creative potential and creative performance, approximately 30% of the total respondents stated that they were affected to a very large extent and by the discrimination actions at work. 70% of all respondents claimed that their creative potential and their creative performance were slightly affected by discrimination in the workplace.

The results of our research are justified by the age of the respondents (up to 30 years old 74.2% of the total respondents, between 31 and 40 years old 14.4%, between 41 and 50 years old 8.2% and above 50 years old 3, 2%) and through work experience (59.5% of all respondents have work experience up to 10 years, 7.2% have work experience between 10-15 years, 7.9% have work experience between 15-20 years and 5.4% of the total respondents have over 20 years of work experience and implicitly work experience. Being young and with an experience of 1-3 years of work the creative potential and creative performance is not affected and destroyed to a very small extent by discriminatory attacks in the workplace, which is gratifying and with great prospects in slowing down the destructive process of loss of creativity, involvement and innovation. Young people want to prove the opposite is true and they get involved even if they feel discriminated against because of their young age correlated with lack of experience. Employees with life and work experience feel affected by discrimination and this has strong effects in losing the desire to be creative, innovative, benevolent and a tutor for the new generation within the company.

The results of the research clearly show that discrimination in the workplace affects (to a greater or lesser extent) involvement in teamwork, innovation, creative potential and creative performance of all employees who have experienced discrimination of any kind.

Row Labels	Count of question 7 - Value					Count of question 7 - Percentage				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Female	161	28	28	11	24	59%	68%	74%	61%	73%
Male	106	13	9	7	7	39%	32%	24%	39%	21%
Prefer to not say	7		1		2	3%	0%	3%	0%	6%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Row Labels	Count of question 7 - Value					Count of question 7 - Percentage				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Up to 20	55	11	8	3	6	20%	27%	21%	17%	18%
Between 21 and 30	152	23	23	10	9	55%	56%	61%	56%	27%
Between 31 and 40	41	7	2	2	6	15%	17%	5%	11%	18%
Between 41 and 50	19		3	2	9	7%	0%	8%	11%	27%
Above 50	7		2	1	3	3%	0%	5%	6%	9%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure no. 4. The respondents' perception of discrimination in the workplace according to question: "Because of discrimination I no longer felt the need to get involved in the teamwork activities"**

*Source: results of the authors' research*

For question seven, we chose to make a statistical interpretation, using the Pearson correlation coefficient for the four sub-points displayed in question seven. "Because of discrimination I no longer felt the need to get involved in teamwork activities", for this question we made a careful correlation on this question and the variable gender or sex. The closer the correlation coefficient is to the absolute value of one, the stronger the link between two variables. In the case of the sign above, the correlation is 0.107, which means that the link is weak, although the response rate for women is 59%, being a favorite percentage. For "Because of discrimination, I was no longer creative in finding solutions for the company" the correlation coefficient is 0.97, in this case we have a strong connection, so people aged between 21 and 30 will no longer approach innovative solutions for solving everyday obstacles, compared to people between the ages of 31 and 40. In this case the stability and monotony of a job, which adopts discriminatory practices, will not affect the creativity of employees who, we assume they have a family and job stability is a priority compared to young people, who want to evolve harmoniously in a creative environment. In the case of "Because of discrimination, I was no longer innovative in solving work problems" the correlation coefficient is 0.96 case similar to the one presented above.

### Conclusions

In conclusion, we consider that age is very relevant to analyze the impact of discrimination on creativity in the workplace, according to the study. Thus, the desire for professional development is accentuated, even in the case of concrete situations of discrimination, it is observed that young people do not have the necessary experience in the field of work. A plus in this research is brought by the motto of companies to employ more and more graduates, to create jobs and to grow the economy. According to the research results, women feel much more discriminated against compared to men, even though feminists have fought and are fighting for gender rights around the world. The fact that this component is still felt and is worrying, we noticed this difference in relation to discrimination in the context of promotions or bonuses dedicated to employees as a result of performance. We have noticed that this type of discrimination is much more common in females. Women between ages of 21 and 30 feel very discriminated in terms of development and promotion in their current job; and 11% of all respondents feel intimidated by their superiors. There is a direct and strong correlation between discrimination in the

workplace and employee creativity, as evidenced by the application of the Pearson correlation coefficient to the undertaken research. Resolving the workplace discrimination should be the first goal for each company that looks for evolution through creativity.

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