

Workplace Diversity: Issues and Challenges

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Abstract

PURPOSE- The purpose of the paper is to develop a theoretical framework for further understanding of the concept of diversity at workplace. It seeks to identify issues and challenges of diversity in workplace

DESIGN- METHODOLOGY/ APPROACH- Extensive Review of literature has been done for conceptualization of diversity at workplace.

IMPLICATION- The paper adds to the existing literature of multiculturalism and diversity in workplace. Diversity in workplace is a matter of great concern in a large number of organizations in today's comprehensive environment because diversity will help build and maintain the strength of your workforce. This paper draws attention of the management to the benefits of diversity in workplace which may help in building organizational commitment among the employees and assist in retaining them within the organization.

Keywords: Brand Awareness, Consumer satisfaction, Brand Loyalty, Dove soap, MNC'S.

Introduction

The concept of diversity includes acceptance and respect. It means that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. These dimensions may be race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies.

Workplace diversity refers to the variety of differences between people in an organization. That sounds simple, but diversity encompasses race, gender, ethnic group, age, personality, Cognitive style, tenure, organizational function, education, background, and more. Diversity involves not only how people perceive themselves but also how they perceive others. Those perceptions affect their interactions. Assortment of employees to function effectively as an organization, human resource professionals need to deal effectively with issues such as communication, adaptability, and change.

Literature Review

Workplace Diversity: Concept

Workplace diversity is a complex, controversial, and supporting phenomena (Janssens & Steyaert, 2003) [7]. It has been conceptualized by researchers from several viewpoints. Several it is a narrow perspective, while some others from a broad view (Nkomo, 1995) [13]. Narrow definition argues that the concept of diversity should be restricted to specific cultural categories such as race and gender e.g. Cross, Katz, Miller & Seashore, 1994) [1]. Diversity based on race, society and gender cannot be understood in the same way as diversity based on organizational functions, abilities or cognitive orientations (Nkomo, 1995) [13]. Moreover, the key issues of diversity arise from the discrimination and elimination of cultural groups (Cross *et al.*, 1994) [1]. Therefore, diversity is an inclusive concept to all individuals, it will become very difficult to identify discrimination practices. The main concern of this standpoint is that a broad definition may imply that all differences among people are the same. The danger in narrowly defining diversity, however, is that only one dimension of cultural diversity (race,

age, ethnicity, or gender) is by and large the subject of research at a time. Since a cultural diversity dimension interacts with other dimensions of diversity, a narrow concept of diversity would be incomplete by failing to recognize these interactions (Michaéla, Deanne, Paul, & Janique, 2003) [8]

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is an important concept in a rapidly changing world. With change comes not only a different view of the world, but also changes in language to name that "new" world. An operational definition of multiculturalism as a starting point to better clarify our human interactions. Multiculturalism is a system of beliefs and behaviours that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences. Multiculturalism encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society.

Multiculturalism also has the validity of the cultural expressions and contributions of the various groups. This is not to imply that all cultural contributions are of equal value and social worth, or that all should be tolerated. Some cultural practices are better than others for the overall betterment of society.

Benefits of Diversity in the Workplace

Employing in the diverse workforce has strategic advantages. Diversity is beneficial to both associates and employers. These benefits are as follows-

- New ideas and perspective.
- Higher productivity
- Lower employee turnover.
- Better understanding of clients
- Enhanced corporate reputation
- Better access to new markets.
- Although associates are interdependent in the workplace, respecting individual differences can increase productivity.

- Diversity in the workplace can reduce lawsuits and increase marketing opportunities, recruitment, creativity, and business image (Esty, *et al.*, 1995).

In an era when flexibility and creativity are keys to competitiveness, diversity is critical for an organization's success. Also, the consequences (loss of time and money) should not be overlooked

Challenges of workplace diversity

One of the biggest obstacles we deal with every day in creating an inclusive environment. There are challenges to managing a diverse work population. Managing diversity is more than simply acknowledging differences in people. It involves recognizing the value of differences, fighting discrimination, and promoting where every member must listen and have the chance to speak, are good ways to create dialogues.

Conceptual framework

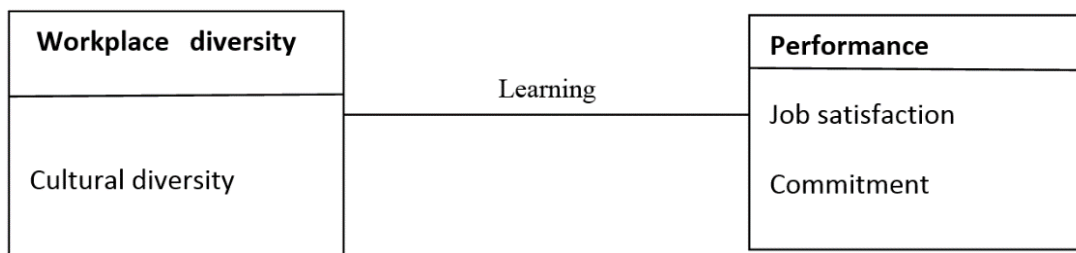


Fig 1

Workplace diversity and performance

The dramatic changes are occurring around the world not only rapid changes in technology and new service opportunities, but also from the evolution of new domestic infrastructures and competitive environments. Cultural diversity affects the performance of work groups. Many researchers have suggested that an element of diversity serves as an important component in creative problem solving. Multicultural work groups offer several forms of diversity, including a diversity of values (Hofstede, 1984 [5]; McCarrey, 1988) [9], of cognitive structures (Redding, 1980) [14], and of behavioural styles (Jackofsky *et al.*, 1988) [6]. The potential productivity of culturally diverse teams is high because they have the extra breadth of insights, perspectives, and experiences that make possible the creation of new and better ideas.

Culturally diverse groups rarely achieve their full potential. Mistrust, misunderstanding, miscommunication, and so on often work against the benefits of diversity.

Culturally diverse teams hope to achieve their potential (Copeland, 1988 [2]; Cox *et al.*, 1991 [3]; Esty, 1988 [4]; Mandell & Kohler-Gray, 1990 [10]; Marmer-Solomon, 1989 [12] Managers should be able to use diversity to promote collective learning, to enhance performance (Maznevski, 1994) [11].

But some theories lead to different and sometimes contradictory hypotheses regarding the effects of diversity on group process and performance (Michaéla, Deanne, Paul, & Janique 2003) [8]. Social classification and similarity-attraction theory calculate negative effects, such as reduction in within-group communication, decreased satisfaction and commitment, and increased labour turnover. However, from the information and decision-making perspective, positive effects of diversity are hypothesized, mainly because more diverse work-teams are

Managers should implement policies such as mentoring programs to provide associates access to information and opportunities. Also, associates should never be denied necessary, constructive, critical feedback for learning about mistakes and successes (Flagg, 2002).

Objective of the study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

The purpose of the paper is to develop a theoretical framework for further understanding of the concept of diversity at workplace.

It seeks to identify issues and challenges of diversity in workplace.

Examine the relationship between workplace diversity, learning and performance.

expected to process information differently, as team members may bring together differing viewpoints (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998; Cox, 1993; Pollar & Gonzalez, 1994). This, in turn, is expected to lead to more creativity and increased performance.

Table 1: Relationships between cultural diversity, learning, and performance

Cultural Diversity			
		High	Low
Learning	Higher-Level	High Performance	High Performance
	Operational-Level	Low Performance	Low Performance

Conclusion

A diverse workforce is a sign of a changing world and marketplace. Diverse work environment bring high value to organizations. Individual differences will benefit the workplace by creating a competitive edge and increasing work productivity. Organizations with diverse employees are better suited to serve diverse external customers in an increasingly global market. Such organizations have a better understanding of the requirements of the legal, political, social, economic, and cultural environments. Multicultural workforce is fruitful to survive in the competitive environment managing diversity means enabling a multicultural workforce to learn and to perform to its potential in an equitable work environment. Diversity management means by creating a fair and safe environment where everyone has access to opportunities and challenges. Most workplaces are made up of diverse cultures, so organizations need to learn how to adapt to be successful.

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