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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

OBJECTIVES

HYPOTHESIS (ES)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

CONCLUSIONS

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WORKFORCE DIVERSITY: CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

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ABSTRACT

In present scenario the workforce in an organization is heterogeneous and therefore workforce diversity is a primary concern for most of the businesses. Workforce diversity means similarities and differences among employees in terms of age, cultural background, physical abilities and disabilities, race, religion, gender, and sexual orientation. Diversity is critically linked to the organization's strategic direction. Where diversity flourishes the potential benefits from better creativity and decision making and greater innovation can be accrued to help increase organizations competitiveness. This paper tries to highlight the issues and challenges faced by organization due to work force diversity and also its effect on productivity.

KEYWORDS

human resource management, heterogeneous, work force diversity, productivity.

INTRODUCTION

In an organization human recourse is the most important resource and managing the resource is a big task. In this globalised world managing the work force is a big task because of work force diversity. Every organization emphasizes on convergence of collective goals, objectives, issues, problems and results. Therefore, organization requires people to come together irrespective of their religion, caste, race, gender etc. to unite and pursue common goals. Managing such diversity requires strict conformance to the principles of uniformity. A truly diverse organization is capable to achieve efficiency and competitiveness, polling the collective efforts of diverse workforce. Due to world coming closer the labour markets have now changed employment landscape in world's labour market. Such change in the labour market extend the definition of diversity beyond gender issues, and consider it from a broad perspective of workplace diversity. Work place diversity encompasses personality and work style, race, age, ethnicity, gender, religion, caste, socio-economic stratification, education, organizational hierarchies, proximity or distance from headquarters and host many other issues which differentiate people either individually or in a group from another Workforce diversity management has become an important issue for public as well as Private organizations. Its importance has mainly been brought about by the free movement of labour due to globalization and the fight for human rights by certain minority groups who feel excluded from the employment sector.

OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the various factors leads to workforce diversity.
2. To analyse the issues and challenges faced due to the workforce diversity.
3. To provide suggestions if any, to overcome these issues and challenges.

TO UNDERSTAND THE VARIOUS FACTORS LEADS TO WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

Diversity is widespread. We all are aware of it since decades. Due to globalisation world becoming closer and in developing countries there is a shift from rural to urban population which leads to obvious work force diversity. No two persons are similar. The world has been and is a stage of huge mix of people with different backgrounds, religion, castes, race, culture, behaviour, age, marital status, nationality, educational qualification, political affiliation, and levels of ability, personality, gender and many more which vary across the globe. Work place diversity therefore, intends to also consist of social, economic and political visible and non-visible differences which might not have a direct creational origin from the work place, but certainly have direct impact on work attitude and performance at the work place. Diversity itself relates to the fact that we are all unique individuals. Organizations are becoming increasingly cosmopolitan. Though they work together, they maintain their distinct identities, diverse culture and separate lifestyles. Managers of today must learn to live with these diverse behaviours. Diversity, if properly managed, can increase creativity and innovation in organizations as well as improve decision making by providing different perspectives on problems. Diversity mainly came into the picture when globalization came in 1990-91. As the wave of globalization sweeps across the organizations, there is a convergence of workforce from diverse countries, cultures, values, styles etc., Such convergence of distinctly different people presents tremendous opportunities as well as challenges.

The followings are the factors which lead to workforce diversity:

Language-A common example of cultural diversity in the workplace is a multilingual workforce. Language diversity can introduce communication complications, but can also provide benefits for the business. Potential customers may leave the business because the staff can't understand their orders.

Age- Age is often overlooked when considering workplace diversity but can be a point of major divergence in experience and knowledge. Consider the common stereotype that younger people are more tech savvy, whereas older people are opposed to contemporary trends.

Religion - Employees can bring varied belief systems and degrees of religious observation with them into the workplace. These differences can sometimes manifest in overt needs, such as getting certain holidays off, dietary restrictions, clothing and prayer requirements. The differences may be more subtle, simply informing employee personalities and the character of their interactions with others. Religious diversity in the workplace creates a need for effective communication, respect, and empathy among workers.

Cultural Differences- If a minority employee who has a track record of giving stellar presentations is suddenly dismissed from client meetings, he could feel it's because of his religious or cultural beliefs. Ultimately, this decreases his confidence, makes him feel like an outcast and hampers his contributions.

Gender- One the oldest and most common diversity issues in the workplace is the "men vs. women" topic. Over the years, a new element in the disputes over equal pay and opportunity is the transgender employee. Some corporations have trouble dealing with the fact that a man in women's clothing or a woman in the stages of "becoming a man" may perform equally as well on the job done as those in traditional gender roles.

Harassment- Harassment can sometimes be an issue in a diversified work environment, but should absolutely never be tolerated. Recognizing harassment is key in preventing and eliminating discrimination from the workplace.

Communication- Even when no prejudice exits among employees, a diversified workplace can bring about certain communication issues. Hiring immigrants who speak little or no English can reduce productivity by creating a communication barrier among team members.

Generation Gaps- In larger diversified corporations, staffs are often made up of workers who range in age from teenagers to senior citizens. Inevitably, generation gaps can become an issue and the age differences can trigger "cliques" and separation of the company as a unit. Bridging the gap between multiple generations of workers can sometimes become an issue for employers attempting to establish teamwork.

Disabilities- Unfortunately, workers who are mentally or physically handicapped sometimes encounter discriminatory behaviour from insensitive co-workers. In some cases, employers innocently overlook handicapped worker's needs, such as ramps or special needs equipment and they are not able to match their counterpart in work.

Socio-economic stratification- In an organisation people of same age, gender and qualification come from different socio-economic background. Though the qualification for work is same their approach, habit differ due to the social background they came from.

Organisational hierarchy- Every organisation has a hierarchy which discriminates employees as top level management, office level, supervisory level and finally shop floor level. Due to which authority is to be delegated which leads to workforce diversity.

TO ANALYSE THE ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FACED DUE TO THE WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

Workforce Diversity, if properly managed, can increase creativity and innovation in organizations as well as improve decision making by providing different perspectives on problems. Diversity mainly came into the picture when globalization came in 1990-91. As the wave of globalization sweeps across the organizations, there is a convergence of workforce from diverse countries, cultures, values, styles etc., Such convergence of distinctly different people presents tremendous opportunities as well as challenges.

SWOC ANALYSIS
STRENGTHS
1. Increased Adaptability- Employees from diverse backgrounds bring individual talents and experiences in suggesting ideas that are flexible in adapting to fluctuating markets and customer demands.
2. Broader service range – A diverse collection of skills and experiences (e.g. languages, cultural understanding) allows a company to provide service to customers on a global basis.
3. Variety of viewpoints- A diverse workforce that feels comfortable communicating varying points of view provides a larger pool of ideas and experiences.
4. More effective execution- Companies that encourage diversity in the workplace inspire all of their employees to perform to their highest ability

WEAKNESS
1. Delayed decisions as many men more minds
2. Gender bias- generally an all organisations women are not treated at par with men and face discrimination.
3. Communication- by having immigrant's language becomes a big issue and they do not feel at home nor they are able to cope up with local language.
4. Stereotypes- though we say unity in diversity it actually does not happened.

OPPORTUNITIES
1. Innovation and Creative thinking
2. Expansion of market share
3. Increased Productivity and quality products and services

CHALLENGES
1. To create atmosphere of unity in diversity
2. Getting work done from diversified age group, culture and gender.
3. Difficulty in formulating and implementing diversity policy.

CHALLENGES IN MANAGING EMPLOYEE DIVERSITY

Taking full advantage of the benefits of diversity in the workplace is not without its challenges. Some of those challenges are:

Communication - Perceptual, cultural and language barriers need to be overcome for diversity programs to succeed. Ineffective communication of key objectives results in confusion, lack of teamwork, and low morale.

Successful Management of Diversity in the Workplace - Diversity training alone is not sufficient for your organization's diversity management plan. A strategy must be created and implemented to create a culture of diversity that permeates every department and function of the organization.

Individual versus Group Fairness: This issue is closely related to the "difference in divisive versus better" i.e. how far management should go in adapting HR programs to diverse employee groups.

Resistance to Change: Long established corporate culture is very resistant to change and this resistance is a major roadblock for women and minorities seeking to survive and prosper in corporate setting.

Resentment: Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) was imposed by government rather than self-initiated. The response to this forced change was in many cases of government reservations.

Group Cohesiveness and Interpersonal Conflict: Although employee diversity can lead to greater creativity and better problem solving; it can also lead to open conflict and chaos if there is mistrust and lack of respect among groups. This means that as organizations become more diverse, they face greater risks that employees will not work together effectively. Interpersonal friction rather than cooperation may become the norm.

Segmented Communication Networks: It has been seen that most communication in the organization occurs between people with some similarities either by way of gender or by way of same place.

Backlash: Some group in the organization feels that they have to defend themselves against encroachments by those using their gender or ethnicity to lay claim to organizational resources. Thus, while women and minorities may view a firm's cultural diversity policy as a commitment to improving their chances of advancement.

Retention: The job satisfaction levels of women and minorities are often lower than those of majorities. Therefore, it becomes difficult to retain such people in an organization.

Gender mainstreaming- By gender mainstreaming in workplace, organisations eliminate discrimination between men women. For both men and women to work together, the workplaces need to have rules which favour both.

TO PROVIDE SUGGESTIONS IF ANY, TO OVERCOME THESE ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

- **Embrace Diversity:** Successfully valuing diversity starts with accepting the principle of multiculturalism. Accept the value of diversity for its own sake not simply because you have to. The acceptance must be reflected in actions and words.
- **Recruit Broadly:** When you have job openings, work to get a diverse applicant pool. Avoid relying on referrals from current employees, since this tends to produce candidates similar to existing work force. An exception is that if the present workforce is fairly diversified then there is no harm in accepting referrals from current employees.
- **Select Fairly:** Make sure your selection process does not discriminate. Particularly ensure that selection tests are job related.
- **Provide Orientation and Training:** Making the transition from outsider to insider can be particularly difficult for non-traditional employees.
- **Sensitize all Employees:** Encourage all employees to embrace diversity. Provide diversity training to help all employees see the value in diversity.
- **Strive to be Flexible:** Part of valuing diversity is recognizing that different groups have different needs and values. Be flexible in accommodating employee requests.
- **Seek to Motivate Individually:** A manager or the superior must be aware of the back ground, cultures, and values of employees. The motivation factors for a full time working mother to support her two young children are different from the needs of a young, single, part-time employee or an older employee who is working to supplement his or her retirement income.
- **Reinforce Employee Differences:** Encourage employees to embrace and value diverse views. Create traditions and ceremonies that promote diversity. Celebrate diversity by accentuating its positive aspects. But also be prepared to deal with the challenges of diversity such as mistrust, miscommunication, and lack of cohesiveness, attitudinal differences and stress.

- **Involve all when Designing the Program:** Involve as many employees from every level in the organization as you can when designing a diversity initiative. This gets people talking about the program and promotes ownership and buy-in.
- **Avoid stereotypes:** Stereotypes are pre conceived notions which a person holds for particular person. They are beliefs that all members of specific groups share similar traits and are likely to behave in the same way. Stereotypes create categories and then fit individuals into them. Holding Stereotypes are harmful for several reasons.

CONCLUSION

A diverse workforce is a reflection of a changing world and marketplaces. Diverse work teams bring the value to organisations. Respecting individual differences will benefit the workplace by creating a competitive edge and an increasing productivity.

Workforce diversity is an advantage cum disadvantage of all the organisations. It is a not a problem if we look at it with a positive sense and accept it, it will actually increase productivity and lead to innovation, but if you angle to look at it is negative then it will spread hatred among employee by taking up small issues and finally the organisation will suffer. Changes are investable and we should better accept them with smile. Diversity, if positively managed, can increase creativity and innovations in organisation as well as improve decision making by providing different prospective on problems. When diversity is not managed properly, there is potential for higher turnover, more difficult communication and more interpersonal conflicts. So in the world of globalisation, we cannot stop workforce diversity so let's accept it and try to live with it.

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