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WORKFORCE DIVERSITY AND ITS IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: A STUDY OF IT COMPANIES IN TAMILNADU

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ABSTRACT

The present empirical study clearly indicate that there is a strong positive impact of workforce heterogeneity on the employee performance. This study mainly focused only on four diversity dimensions - gender, age, educational background and ethnicity - which may have limited the robustness of this research. Since the workforce diversity becomes one of most popular ways to evaluate employee performance in an organization in recent year, the research tends to provide the evidence to support future research related to this field. It is found from the research results that there is a significant relationship of the research variables such as gender, educational background & ethnicity toward employee performance. Business organizations should start realizing the need to be tackled effectively such demographic categories in order to stay ahead of its competitors. The managers and leaders must consider the following points to manage workforce diversity effectively in the IT companies.

KEYWORDS

employee performance, workforce diversity.

INTRODUCTION

Today's global economy is dynamic, interconnected, borderless and cross-functional. Advances in technology and the advent of a global economy bring the people of the world closer together than ever before. Diversity in the workplace means bringing together people of different ethnic backgrounds, religions and age groups into a cohesive and productive unit. Advances in communication technology, such as the Internet and cellular phones, have made the marketplace a more global concept. In order to survive, a company needs to be able to manage and utilize its diverse workplace effectively.

Managing diversity in the workplace should be a part of the culture of the entire organization. Managing diversity focuses on maximizing the ability of all employees to contribute to organizational goals. Ignoring diversity issues costs time, money, and efficiency. Some of the consequences can include unhealthy tensions; loss of productivity because of increased conflict; inability to attract and retain talented people of all kinds; complaints and legal actions; and inability to retain valuable employees, resulting in lost investments in recruitment and training.

The organizations must develop and employ the necessary policies and procedures for attracting and retaining the best and most qualified workers in order to maintain a competitive advantage among their counterparts and increase their effectiveness. To achieve success and maintain a competitive advantage, the organization must be able to draw on the most important resource such as the skills of the workforce. With the increasing richness of diversity in the workforce, the organization needs to expand its outlook and use creative strategies to be successful in retaining the talent pool of employees.

Today's managers are responsible for both leading employees and responding to the needs of customers who are more ethnically and culturally diverse. Leaders in both the public and the private sectors are focusing more attention on the issue of diversity. Whether the goal is to be an employer of choice, to provide excellent customer service, or to maintain a competitive edge, diversity is increasingly recognized and utilized as an important organizational resource.

Leaders and managers within IT companies are primarily responsible for the success of workforce diversity policies because they must ensure that the diversity policies framed and implemented by them should manage the workforce diversity effectively. Managing diversity means acknowledging people's differences and recognizing these differences as valuable. It enhances good management practices by preventing discrimination and promoting inclusiveness. Good management alone will not necessarily help employees work effectively with a diverse workforce.

Managing workforce diversity plays a vital role in the area of management and it is a way to ensure employee retention and greater productivity. The most important issues of workforce diversity are to address the problems of discrimination in terms of gender, age, ethnicity and education background. When diversity is not managed properly, there will be a potential scope for higher turnover of employees, difficulty in communication and interpersonal conflicts. Overall, it will be adversarial to the organization's performance, profitability and reputation.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES & QUESTIONS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary aim of this research is to provide insights and in-depth understanding of the various dimensions of workforce diversity and their impact on employee performance in IT companies. Secondly, the purpose of this research is to identify whether the variables include gender, age, ethnicity and education background would affect employee performance in IT companies. Lastly, the specific objectives of this research are summarized below:

- To throw a light on the antecedents of workforce diversity and their effects on employee behaviour in IT companies.
- To identify whether the variables such as gender, age, ethnicity and education background would affect workforce diversity in an organization.
- To analyze the significant relationship between gender, ethnicity and educational background and their effects on IT employee performance.
- To offer appropriate suggestions for IT companies to implement practices and policies to manage diversity and build an inclusive and harmonious workplace.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study was exclusively designed to identify the various dimensions of workforce diversity and their impact on employee performance in IT companies located in Tamilnadu. The research questions of this proposed study are summarized below:

1. What are the dimensions of workforce diversity that affect the employee behaviours in IT companies.
2. What is the significant relationship of gender, ethnicity & educational background toward employee performance in IT companies?
3. What is the relationship between workforce diversity and its impact on IT employee performance?
4. Why should IT company care about managing workforce diversity?

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

India's workforce has become increasingly diverse over the last decade. Employees from different generations, gender, nationalities and cultures often work together in the same organization. With such workforce diversity, it becomes important for organizations to put in place policies and practices to build an inclusive and harmonious workplace. An inclusive and harmonious workplace is one that appreciates differences amongst workers and works towards maximizing their potential.

The main objective of this research is to identify various dimensions of workforce diversity in IT companies and to analyze the effect of these dimensions on employees' performance. The study also distinguishes the factors that can affect the employees' performance in IT companies. This research study would act as a guideline for the potential new entrants on workforce diversity issues which the company needs to consider before starting its business. The main purpose of the research is to develop a methodology that can be applied to the analysis of workforce diversity and its effect on employee performance in IT companies.

The main thrust of this study is to examine how various dimensions of workforce diversity can potentially affect the employee performance in IT companies. Firstly, a brief review of the dimensions of workforce diversity such as gender, age, ethnicity and education background. Secondly, a past research findings on workforce diversity will be summarized and applied to the employees' performance. Then, the result of an empirical study examines issues related to workforce diversity and its impact on employees' performance in IT companies. Lastly, recommendations will be provided concerning the impact of workforce diversity on employees' performance in IT firms.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of literature chapter consists of reviews of secondary data that researchers have collected from other journals, books and primary data. It also outlines the literature and relevant theoretical model reviews regarding the impact of workforce diversity on the employee performance. The determinant of variables is necessary to understand the relationship between the independent variables (gender, age, ethnicity, and education background) and the dependent variable (employee performance). Hypothesis will be formulated based on the relationship between the dependent variables and independent variables.

The literature on workplace diversity contains two main bodies of work. One area focuses on the development of conceptual frameworks for understanding diversity and its impact on employee performance (Jackson, Joshi, & Erhardt, 2003; Webber & Donahue, 2001). The other area presents generalized prescriptions for effectively managing workplace diversity (Mor-Barak, 2005).

WORKPLACE DIVERSITY: CONCEPT AND THEORY

Generally, diversity can be defined as differences relating to gender, ethnicity, age, religion, sexual orientation, physical ability or any other source of difference can have a major impact on employee engagement. With globalization and rising migration, as well as increasing competition to hire, retain and motivate the best employees, companies around the world have to manage diverse workforces.

Workplace diversity is a complex, controversial, and political phenomena (Janssen & Steyaert, 2003). It has been conceptualized by researchers from several viewpoints. Several have looked at it from a narrow perspective, while some others from a broad view (Nkomo, 1995). Scholars favourably disposed to a narrow definition argue that the concept of diversity should be restricted to specific cultural categories such as race and gender (e.g. Cross, Katz, Miller & Seashore, 1994). Some opine that diversity based on race, ethnicity and gender cannot be understood in the same way as diversity based on organizational functions, abilities or cognitive orientations (Nkomo, 1995).

Workforce diversity refers to organizations that are becoming more heterogeneous with the mix of people in terms of gender, age, race, and education background (Robbins, 2009). A diverse workforce for instance, includes gender, age, ethnicity, and education background According to Robbins (2009), workforce diversity has important implications toward management practices and policies. Frequently, diversity is viewed in a limited fashion, primarily addressing issues of race or gender differences, and linked to the laws providing protected status to certain groups. We have used a very broad definition of diversity, to encompass most characteristics that individuals possess that affect the way they think and do things.

Moreover, the key issues of diversity are those that arise because of discrimination and exclusion of cultural groups from traditional organizations (Cross et al., 1994). Therefore, if diversity is a concept that is inclusive 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. Thus, diversity studies would then be reduced to the conclusion that 'everyone is different' and, if this conclusion is accepted, the concept of diversity may become "nothing more than a benign, meaningless concept" (Nkomo, 1995). 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 deficient by failing to recognize these interactions (Michaéla, Deanne, Paul, & Janique, 2003).

Scholars, who advocate a broad definition (e.g. Jackson, May & Whitney, 1995) argue that diversity encompasses all the possible ways people can differ. Individuals, according to this school of thought, do not only differ because of their race, gender, age and other demographic categories, but also because of their values, abilities, organizational function, tenure and personality. They contend that an individual has multiple identities and that the manifold dimensions cannot be isolated in an organizational setting. Apart from bringing their race, age, ethnicity, and gender, individuals also come with their particular knowledge, personality, and cognitive style to the work place.

Therefore, in order to understand the dynamics of a heterogeneous workforce, the interactive effects of multi-dimensional diversity have to be addressed. In addition, it is argued that a broadening of the concept of diversity has a potential positive effect on diversity management programs, as it will be more acceptable if it is all inclusive i.e. not only oriented towards specific demographic groups of employees (Thomas, 1991).

McGath, Berdahl & Arrow (1995) conceptualized workplace diversity by developing a five cluster classification. This often cited categorization is as follows: demographic characteristics such as age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, physical status, religion and education; task-related knowledge, skills and capacities; values, views and attitudes; personal, cognitive and attitudinal styles; Status in the organization such as one's hierarchical position, professional domain, departmental affiliation and seniority.

Theoretically, the workplace diversity literature espouses three different theoretical frameworks for the examination of the possible effects of workplace diversity (Williams & O'Reilly 1998). The first is social categorization, which, according to Turner (1987) describes the categorization of people based on salient attributes like gender, ethnicity or age, resulting in stereotyping on the basis of these differences. The second is similarity/attraction theory, which asserts that similarity on salient and non-salient attributes like race or values increases interpersonal attraction and attachment (Berscheid & Walster, 1978). The third is information and decision making theory, which examines the impact of distribution of information and expertise on work-teams (Wittenbaum & Stasser, 1996).

These theories lead to different and sometimes contradictory hypotheses regarding the effects of diversity on group process and performance (Michaéla, Deanne, Paul, & Janique 2003). Social categorization and similarity-attraction theory predict 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 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.

Research findings suggest that several factors could be responsible for the conflicts provoked by diversity in work-team composition. Some researchers (Pelled, Cummings, & Kizilos, 1999; Tsui, Egan, & O' Reilly, 1992) have proposed that identifying individual group members with distinct groups (i.e., "out-groups") may disrupt group dynamics. Consistent with this, research on self-categorization theory has shown that out-group members evoke more disliking, distrust, and competition than in group members (Hogg, Cooper-Shaw, & Holz worth, 1993). Moreover, biases against out-group members seem to unfold automatically: the perception of a salient quality (e.g., race, sex) more or less inevitably triggers a corresponding categorization (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990).

In addition, if out-group members come from cultures or sub cultures with which in-group members are unfamiliar, linguistic or paralinguistic differences may foster miscommunication and misunderstanding (Hambrick, Davison, Snell, & Snow, 1998; Palich & Gomez-Mejia, 1999). Less palpable differences associated

with attitudes, perceptions, and expectations (Palich & Gomez-Mejia, 1999) may pose subtler but nevertheless formidable deterrents to communication and understanding in diverse groups. Together, these factors may combine to make diverse groups a fertile breeding ground for misunderstanding and discord. Generally, there is empirical support for the assumption that all dimensions of diversity can lead to positive as well as negative effects (Jackson et al., 2003). Social categorization theory, emphasize that similarities and dissimilarities can lead to categorizations which, in turn, lead to favoring one's in-group to the detriment of one or more out-groups social (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). On an intra-group level, this approach is typically referred to as relational demography. Thus, categorizations within a work group (based on an attribute such as gender, race, or age) can lead to the problematic formation of sub-groups ("us" versus "them").

These divergences are likely to manifest themselves as intra-group task conflict. As diversity within a work group increases, such task conflict is likely to increase. Increased diversity generally means there is a greater probability that individual exchanges will be with dissimilar others. Members are more likely to hear views that diverge from their own, so intra-group task conflict may become more pronounced. Also, cognitive tasks in organizations typically demand the experience and knowledge obtained through exposure to functional areas and organizational tenure.

Ancona and Caldwell (1992) noted that for tasks such as those of product development teams, functional background and company tenure are likely to be particularly important because they determine one's technical skills, information, expertise, and one's perspective on an organization's history. Others (Sessa & Jackson, 1995; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Pelled, 1996) have similarly argued that functional background and tenure are especially pertinent to work group tasks. Age, gender, and race, in contrast, are low in job-relatedness.

These empirical evidences notwithstanding, the controversy whether or not there is a positive connection between workplace diversity and organizational performance still persists. Anderson & Metcalfe (2003) reviewed the evidence for managing workplace diversity. They suggested that, while there are claimed gains for workplace diversity, there are also adverse implications. They argued that there is a paucity of stout research examining the impact of diversity upon businesses, which has raised questions about the existence of any connection between workplace diversity and business performance. The business benefits of workplace diversity have been widely contested ever since the idea was conceived. And, even now, there is an ongoing debate as to whether there is indeed any discernable business benefit (Mulholland, Ozbilgin, & Worman, 2005).

Erasmus (2007) mentioned that diversity management and workforce diversity is a forced integration that creates conflict and uncertainty in the workforce as leadership is not skilled in the discipline of diversity management and its principles. As a result, managers do not know how to effectively practice diversity management, and what factors contribute to effective diversity management and task that can deal with diversity related issues in the work place.

According to Dahm (2003), diversity within the workplace can evoke an array of emotions such as some people view diversity as something to be dealt rather than a tool to be used to improve the organization. Even though, many will agree that the results of a diversity-conscious organization add value to the employee and organization. The organizations should embrace diversity in their workforce and work towards achieving it by creating a culture where difference can thrive, rather than working simply for representatives and assimilation (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999).

Today, workforce diversity is a global workplace and marketplace topic. Any business that intends to be successful must have a borderless view and an underlying commitment to ensuring that workforce diversity is part of its day-to-day business conduct (Mor Barak, 2005). Besides, understanding the impacts of diversity on organizational outcomes (such as organizational performance, employee satisfaction, and employee turnover) has become essential for the organization.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY & DESIGN

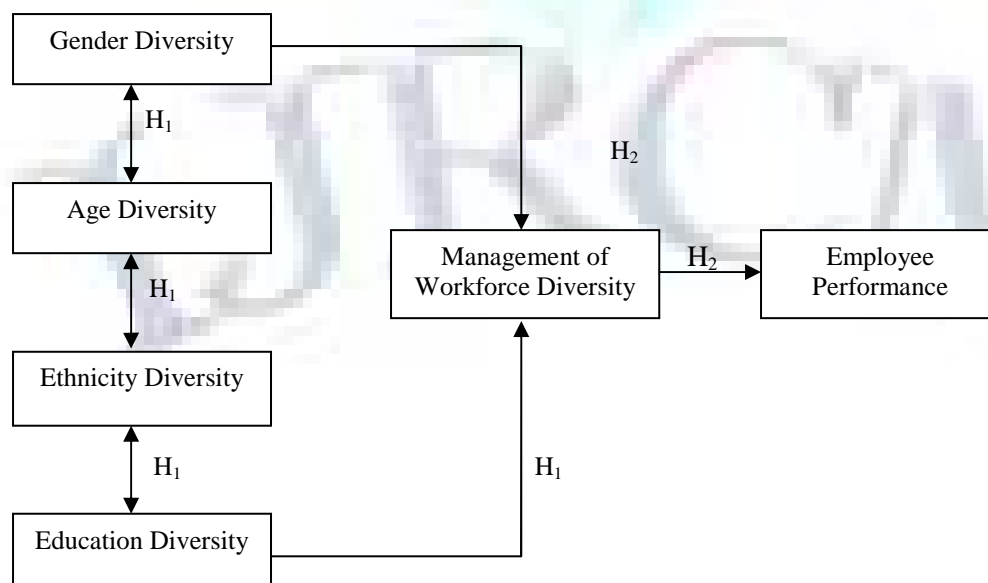
The research methodology includes research framework; hypotheses formation; research instruments; pilot survey; reliability analysis & Cronbach's alpha; and sampling frame.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

As stated earlier, the main objectives of this research are, first, to provide insights and in-depth understanding of the various dimensions of workforce diversity that will affect the employee behaviours in IT companies, and second, to analyze the significant relationships of gender, ethnicity and educational background towards employee performance in IT companies. In order to realize objectives, the research framework is developed as shown in Figure 1. This framework is a simple linear model of relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The antecedents of workforce diversity such as gender, age, ethnicity & educational background as the independent variables. The employee performance of an organization is considered to be the dependent variable of the research model.

The arrows in Figure 1 represent the relationships to be tested in order to achieve the second research objective. Figure 1 indicates that there are four main research variables to be analyzed: gender diversity, age diversity, ethnicity diversity and education diversity. Within each of these research variables, a set of concept variables are included based on related literatures. Each concept variable is measured on a Likert scale of 1-5, where level 5 indicates the highest agreement to the given statement, while 1 indicates the lowest.

FIGURE 1: THE IMPACT OF DIVERSITY IN GENDER, AGE, ETHNICITY AND EDUCATION ON COMPETITIVE EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN AN ORGANIZATION



HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

In this study, employee performance of IT companies is a dependent variable and gender, age, education background of the employees, and ethnicity are the independent variables. Thus, hypothesis of this study is to find that there is any significant relationship between these dependent variable and independent variables. Either one of these independent variables or some of them do have the positive effect to influence employee performance in IT companies.

H₁: There is no significant relationship of gender, educational background & ethnicity toward employee performance in IT companies.

H₂: The three independent variables (such as gender, education background & ethnicity) are not significant in explaining the variance in employee performance of IT companies.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The development of the research instrument was mainly based on new scales, because the researchers could not identify any past studies directly addressing all of issues discussed in this research. However, and wherever possible, the researchers used validated measures that have been previously applied. The constructs, scale items and factor loadings obtained from exploratory factor analysis are presented on the data analysis section. Two consecutive rounds of pre-testing were conducted in order to ensure that the respondents could understand the measurement scales used in this study. First, the questionnaire was reviewed by the academic researchers experienced in questionnaire design and development and next, the questionnaire was piloted with HR experts known to the researchers.

PILOT SURVEY

In order to prepare an effective questionnaire, a pilot survey of 20 employees was conducted in two IT firms located in Chennai, Tamilnadu. The pilot work took in the form of a personal interview where the participants were first handed a copy of the questionnaire and asked to complete it followed by a discussion on any comments or questions they had with respect to major issues of this study. The outcome of the pre-testing process was a slight modification and alteration of the existing scales, in light of the scales context under investigation. Based on the results and comments from the pilot tests, revisions were made to the questionnaire design.

RELIABILITY ANALYSIS & CRONBACH'S ALPHA

After designing the questionnaire, reliability analysis was done to ensure measurements are reliable for our research. A pilot test is a survey which is done on a small group of respondents to make sure the questions being asked in the questionnaire are reliable. Respondents were asked to comment and suggest any changes to the questionnaire. Most of the feedbacks directed to the comprehensibility of items. Therefore the researcher has modified some of the items to improve quality of the questionnaire. Pilot test minimizes the mistakes made in the questionnaire as well as the difficulties before it is distributed to the targeted respondents. Reliability of the questionnaire was tested as well using reliability test with the help of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. The alpha values range from 0.891 to 0.970, which indicates an internal consistency with the alpha value of more than 0.70, so no items were dropped from questionnaire.

TABLE 1: CRONBACH'S ALPHA FOR VARIABLE CONSTRUCTS

Sl.No.	Variable Constructs	Cronbach's α	No. of item
1.	Gender	0.937	10
2.	Age	0.970	5
3.	Education background	0.922	8
4.	Ethnicity	0.891	10
5.	Employee performance	0.957	13

SAMPLING FRAME

The survey reported here was conducted at IT companies located in Tamilnadu. A total of 50 IT companies were selected for the study on the basis of random sampling method. Tamilnadu was chosen as the sample area of the survey because it is considered as one of the major IT hubs in India. The survey population of this study is defined as all employees working in IT firms located in Tamilnadu. A sample size of 130 employees from 50 IT companies located in different geographical areas of Tamilnadu was drawn at random for the study.

A structured questionnaire was used for this complex research project. The data required for the study were purely primary data collected through the structured questionnaire sent to 150 employees who have the general perceptions toward workforce diversity and its impact on the employee performance in the work place. A personal interview was conducted among respondents of 150 employees for collecting reliable data for the research study. This procedure resulted in 130 useful questionnaires or an overall response rate of 86.67%.

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

The data analysis, results and discussions of the study are summarized below:

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

From the survey, it is observed that a majority of the respondents are female (90%) and 40% are male. With respect to age groups, 30% belong to below 25 years of age, 35% belong to 25-35 years of age, 20% belong to 36-45 years of age, and remaining 15% belong to above 45 years. With respect to educational level, majority of the respondents are graduates (40%), 30% are post graduates, remaining 30% have completed advanced computer course. It is also found from the study that most of the respondents fall under the annual income level of 5-10 lacs (40%), 25% fall under 11-20 lacs, 25% fall under above 20 lacs, and remaining 10% fall under below 5 lacs. With respect to marital status, 60% of the respondents are single and 40% of them are married. Regarding diversity of the employees, people in Tamilnadu have diversity in their culture, taboos, values, religion, caste, etc. This research study is useful in accessing the value of workforce diversity in the IT organizations.

In terms of nature of organization, 60% of the respondents work for core IT sector, 20% work for ITES, 20% work for BPO. With respect to work experience, 25% of the respondents have below 5 years of experience, 25% have 5-10 years, 25% have 11-15 years, and 25% have above 15 years of experience. It is found from the survey 85% of the employees are permanent and 15% are contract employees. It is also found that most of the respondents live in nuclear family (60%) and remaining 40% live in joint family.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS RESULTS

Descriptive analysis is where raw data are transformed into a form that will make researchers easier to understand and interpret, rearranging, ordering and manipulating data to provide descriptive information. It is used to determine the main tendencies of the variables. Certain measures like mean, standard deviation and t-distribution are forms of descriptive analysis used to describe the sample data matrix in such a way as to portray the typical respondent and to reveal the general patterns of responses (Burns and Bush, 2006). The main objective of this research is to analyze how the factors of workforce diversity affect the employee behaviour in an organization. Descriptive analysis helps the researcher to find out the factors of workforce diversity that determine the employees' behaviours in an organization.

Measurement of central tendencies is used to discover the mean scores for the five interval-scaled constructs. A total of 46 items (questions) with particular mean score were obtained from the SPSS output. All of the items/questions were being asked using 5-point Likert scale with 1 indicating Strongly Disagree, 2 indicating Disagree, 3 indicating Neutral, 4 indicating Agree, and 5 indicating Strongly Agree. The percentage, mean, standard deviations and t-values of responses for each of the items for gender, age, ethnicity, educational background and employee performance are shown in the following Tables.

1. GENDER DIVERSITY

The employees were asked to rate the statements regarding gender-based factors that determine the workforce diversity in the workplace on a scale of 1 to 5. The aim is to prioritize gender-based workforce diversity constructs which the employees have observed to be most significant in their workplace. According to Table 2, the results are found to be very different from the mid-point 3.0. It is clear that most of the training and development programs designed by the

organization will meet the criteria/requirements of both male and female. Common training and development programs for both male and female was observed to be most significant at 0.1 level of significance. Followed by this, the other most significant gender-based workforce diversity constructs are same career development for all employees (Mean Score=4.33), equal opportunities for growth and advancement exist for both male and female (Mean Score=4.17), The organization does a good job of attracting and hiring employees based on their competency but not on their gender (Mean score=3.83), employees have positive attitude toward gender diversity in this workplace (Mean Score =3.58) and the employees were not discriminated on the gender basis by employer while hiring and recruiting them (Mean Score=3.50).

TABLE 2: GENDER-RELATED FACTORS THAT DETERMINE WORKFORCE DIVERSITY IN WORKPLACE

Construct Variables	Mean	S.D	t
1. Gender discrimination in recruitment process.	3.50	1.35	0.37
2. Competency-based hiring of employees.	3.83	1.35	-0.13
3. Fair Treatment for both male and female.	2.83	1.35	0.61
4. Equal growth opportunities for both male & female.	4.17	1.54	0.76
5. Same career development for all employees.	4.33	1.71	0.78
6. Common Training and Development Programs.	4.88	1.85	0.88
7. Women are more family oriented.	2.00	1.48	0.68
8. Equal opportunity in decision making.	2.50	1.48	-0.34
9. Same performance criteria for both male & female.	1.21	0.81	-0.24
10. Positive Gender diversity in this workplace.	3.58	1.51	-0.28

2. AGE DIVERSITY

The Table 3 presents a set of constructs that influence employee attitude toward workforce diversity based on age-related factors. The respondents were asked to rate the age-based workforce diversity factors in their workplace on a Likert scale of 1 to 5. From the Table 3, it is observed that the construct factors of the age differences in work group might cause a conflict in the work place, positive attitude about age diversity in the workplace, and equal opportunity for training & career development for all employees who belong to different age groups were found to be most significant at 0.1 level of significance.

TABLE 3: AGE-RELATED FACTORS THAT DETERMINE WORKFORCE DIVERSITY IN WORKPLACE

Construct Variables	Mean	S.D	t
1. Equal opportunity for training & career development for all.	3.83	1.21	0.69
2. Members at different age groups in problem solving and decision making process.	2.42	1.17	-0.50
3. Conflict in work group due to age differences.	4.19	1.41	0.72
4. Lack of bonding with people of different age groups.	1.83	1.60	-0.73
5. Age diversity in this workplace.	4.17	1.72	0.73

3. EDUCATION DIVERSITY

The Table 4 portrays a set of construct variables that describe the employee attitude toward educational background and its influence on workforce diversity in the organization. The employees were asked to rate how education-based factors affect employees' bahavious in their workplace on a Likert scale of 1 to 5. It is inferred from the Table 4 that the construct factor of the recruitment plan of the organization, which is prepared based on the education background of the employees has secured a highest mean score of 4.43 and was the significant at 0.1 level of significance. The other significant education-related factors that determine the workforce diversity in workplace are lack of confidence by the employees due to low education background (Mean Score=3.83) and employees have the positive attitude toward education diversity in the workplace (Mean Score=3.73).

TABLE 4: EDUCATION BACKGROUND-RELATED FACTORS THAT DETERMINE WORKFORCE DIVERSITY IN WORKPLACE

Construct Variables	Mean	S.D	t
1. The recruitment plan is based on the education background.	4.43	1.41	0.72
2. Paid study leave for employees.	2.12	1.48	0.68
3. Opportunity for education for lower qualification employees.	1.91	1.21	0.69
4. Conflict due to difference in education background.	2.42	1.72	0.73
5. Lack of confidence due to my education background.	3.83	1.60	0.31
6. All members at different education level in decision making.	2.71	1.57	0.53
7. Equal treatment in diversity of education background	2.13	1.60	-0.73
8. Education diversity in this work place.	3.73	1.41	0.72

4. ETHNICITY DIVERSITY

One of the research objectives is to throw a light on the antecedents of ethnicity and its influence in the workplace. In order to achieve this objective, the employees were asked to rate the statements that describe ethnicity-based workforce diversity on a scale of 1 to 5. The aim is to find whether ethnicity of the employees affects their work behaviour in the organization. According to Table 5, the results are found to be very different from the mid-point 3.0. It is clear that training and development programs designed by the organization will meet the criteria/requirements of both male and female. Common training and development programs for both male and female were observed to be most significant at 0.1 level of significance. Followed by this, the other most significant gender-based workforce diversity constructs are same career development for all employees (Mean Score=4.33), equal opportunities for growth and advancement exist for both male and female (Mean Score=4.17), The organization does a good job of attracting and hiring employees based on their competency but not on their gender (Mean score=3.83), employees have positive attitude toward gender diversity in this workplace (Mean Score =3.58) and the employees were not discriminated on the gender basis by employer while hiring and recruiting them (Mean Score=3.50).

TABLE 5: ETHNICITY-RELATED FACTORS THAT DETERMINE WORKFORCE DIVERSITY IN WORKPLACE

Construct Variables	Mean	S.D	t
1. Attracting & hiring minority people	3.09	1.28	0.25
2. Equal growth & advancement for minority people	3.52	1.86	0.37
3. Concern about traditions, customs, cultures, beliefs & values	4.56	1.73	0.82
4. Different languages speaking employees	2.42	1.17	-0.50
5. Problem in communication due to different languages.	1.83	1.48	-0.79
6. Low self-esteem due to ethnicity	4.17	1.60	0.73
7. Conflict due to ethnicity in educational difference	2.83	1.72	-0.10
8. Members at different ethnicity in decision making.	2.73	1.47	0.32
9. Less effective workgroups due to ethnicity	2.33	1.82	0.52
10. Ethnicity diversity in this work place	3.41	1.29	-0.46

5. EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

Table 6 shows the construct variables that indicate the employee performance in the workplace. The employees have been asked to rate the factors that were felt to be the most significant for improving employee performance in an organization on a Likert scale of 1 to 5. The results of the analysis show that the enjoyment of doing assigned tasks is the primary significant factor that determines the employee performance and was significant at 0.1 level of significance. It is observed from the Table 6 that the other significant factors that affect employee performance and were found to be scored more than mid-point 3 are commitment to the mission and direction of the organization (Mean=4.17), co-operation with my colleagues of different ethnicity (Mean=4.00), improvement of task performance by continuous training (Mean=3.33), motivation to complete the assigned tasks (Mean=3.17) and good performance is needed for the future growth (Mean=3.00).

TABLE 6: CONSTRUCT VARIABLES THAT DETERMINE THE EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

Construct Variables	Mean	S.D	t
1. Enjoyment of doing my tasks.	4.33	0.52	6.32
2. Commitment to the organization's mission.	4.17	0.41	7.00
3. Motivation to complete tasks assigned.	3.17	0.75	0.54
4. Co-operation with my colleagues of different ethnicity.	4.00	0.63	3.87
5. Enjoyment in working with opposite gender.	2.33	0.52	-3.16
6. Salary is based on my performance.	2.00	1.10	-2.24
7. Satisfaction with current salary level.	2.33	0.52	-3.16
8. Chance to use own method of doing the job.	2.67	0.82	-1.00
9. Improvement of task performance by training.	3.33	0.52	1.58
10. Performance is needed for the future growth.	3.00	1.10	0.00
11. Active participation in decision making.	2.00	0.63	-3.87
12. Performance in multicultural workforce.	1.83	0.75	-3.80
13. Management of work force diversity	2.33	0.52	-3.16

MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS (MRA)

The multiple regression analysis is performed to test the second hypothesis (H₂) of the study. The second hypothesis (H₂) of this study was framed to explore the impact of Gender Diversity, Educational Background Diversity and Ethnicity Diversity on Performance of the Employees. The second hypothesis (H₂) of this research study can be expressed in a multiple linear regression equation as described below:

$$\text{Employee Performance} = \text{Constant} + B_1 \text{Gender Diversity} + B_2 \text{Educational Background Diversity} + B_3 \text{Ethnicity Diversity} + \epsilon$$

Table 7 shows that 74.3 percent of the observed variability in the employee performance is explained by the three independent variables (R² = 0.743, Adjusted R² = 0.737). To test the equivalent null hypothesis that there is no linear relationship in the population between the dependent variable (employee performance) and the independent variables (Gender Diversity, Educational Background Diversity and Ethnicity Diversity), the ANOVA in Table 8 is used. Results from Table 8 shows that the ratio of the two mean squares (F) was 116.537 (F-value = 116.537, P < 0.001). Since the observed significance level was less than 0.001, the three variables have a positive influence on performance of the employees. To test the null hypothesis that the population partial regression coefficient for a variable is 0, t-statistic and its observed significance level were used. The results are shown in Table 9.

Results from Table 9 indicate that we can safely reject the null hypotheses (H₀) that the coefficients for Gender Diversity (β = 0.219, t = 2.731, p < 0.01), Educational Background Diversity (β = 0.554, t = 7.477, p < 0.001), and Ethnicity Diversity (β = 0.173, t = 2.685, p < 0.01) are 0. The β weights show that Gender Diversity (β = 0.219) have a significant positive influence on the employee performance. Similarly, the β weights show that Educational Background Diversity (β = 0.554) have a strong significant positive influence on employee performance. Finally, the β weights show that Ethnicity Diversity (β = 0.173) have a positive influence on the employee performance.

Multicollinearity between the independent variables was minimal, as shown by the values of tolerance (0.330 for Gender Diversity, 0.387 for Educational Background Diversity, and 0.511 for Ethnicity Diversity) and VIF that was less than ten for all the three independent variables indicating that the results were reliable. These results support the second hypothesis (H₂).

TABLE 7: MULTIPLE REGRESSION RESULTS FOR THE IMPACT OF GENDER DIVERSITY, EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND DIVERSITY AND ETHNICITY DIVERSITY ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

SUMMARY OF MULTIPLE REGRESSION				
Model	Multiple R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.862 ^a	0.743	0.737	0.572
Note: ^a Predictors: (Constant), Gender Diversity, Educational Background Diversity and Ethnicity Diversity				

TABLE 8: ANOVA RESULTS FOR THE IMPACT OF GENDER DIVERSITY, EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND DIVERSITY AND ETHNICITY DIVERSITY ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

Summary of ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	114.405	3	38.135	116.537	0.000 ^a
	Residual	39.595	121	0.327		
	Total	154.000	124			
Note: ^a Predictors: (Constant), Gender Diversity, Educational Background Diversity and Ethnicity Diversity						
Dependent Variable: Employee Performance						

TABLE 9: RESULTS OF REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS FOR THE IMPACT OF WORKFORCE DIVERSITY ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

Model		Results of Regression Coefficients ^a			t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	Beta (β)			Tolerance	VIF
		Beta (B)	Std. Error	Beta (β)				
1	(Constant)	-0.279	0.227		-1.230	0.221		
	1. Gender Diversity	0.307	0.113	0.219	2.731	0.007	0.330	3.033
	2. Education Diversity	0.661	0.088	0.554	7.477	0.000	0.387	2.583
	3. Ethnicity Diversity	0.237	0.088	0.173	2.685	0.008	0.511	1.955

Note: ^aDependent Variable: Employee Performance

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are numbers of limitation that are identified during the progress of completing this research study. Firstly, a major problem that can never be eliminated during the process of generating information is respondents' bias. This is where respondents may not willing to participate in the survey because answering the questionnaires will be time consuming and does not bring any benefits to them. Therefore, the unresponsive and inactive behavior of the respondents may affect them to provide inaccurate answer in questionnaire. This consequence had limited us from obtaining the reliable information related to the study. Secondly, researchers should achieve consensus on how workforce diversity is view and to develop a generally accepted definition of workforce diversity, thus allowing more researches to take place to explore more benefits and implications of workforce diversity towards organizations' performance. Thirdly, measurements and items adapted from other researches should be adjusted to fit into the research's context. Validity test should be done to assure the validity of the measures. Future researches should expand sample size to better represent the population for better and more accurate results.

RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE STUDY

This study can serve as a guideline for future research. The focus of the study is on the gender, age, ethnicity, and education background of the employees and whether these variables affect their performance in an organization. Firstly, our result is a comparison on the performance of the individual employee and had no comparison based on team performance. Hence we believe that future research can go deeper in this area. Secondly, the researcher should achieve consensus on how workforce diversity is viewed and to develop a generally accepted definition of workforce diversity, thus allowing more researches to take place to explore more benefits and implications of workforce diversity towards organizations' performance. Thirdly, measurements and items adapted from other researches should be adjusted to fit into the research's context. Validity test should be done to assure the validity of the all the measures that determine the workforce diversity. Future researches should expand sample size to better represent the population for better and more accurate results. Last but not least, since this study only focuses on quantitative measure, future works are encouraged in several areas in both quantitative and qualitative measures. It is recommended that future research can get a better understanding for the effects of workforce diversity towards both employee performance and organizational performance in order to go deeper for the study.

CONCLUSION & MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Today, there is a wide spectrum of organizational response to managing workforce diversity. There are some organizations responding to legal mandates; others are focused on discrete programs and policies; still others are implementing broad HR diversity strategies to foster change in culture and work processes. Based on the results showed above, the overall effects of workforce diversity (gender, age, ethnicity and education background) towards the employee performance are significant in most of the ways.

The findings of this empirical study clearly indicate that there is a strong positive impact of workforce heterogeneity on the employee performance. This study mainly focused only on four diversity dimensions - gender, age, educational background and ethnicity - which may have limited the robustness of this research. Since the workforce diversity becomes one of most popular ways to evaluate employee performance in an organization in recent year, the research tends to provide the evidence to support future research related to this field.

It is found from the research results that there is a significant relationship of the research variables such as gender, educational background & ethnicity toward employee performance. Business organizations should start realizing the need to be tackled effectively such demographic categories in order to stay ahead of its competitors. The managers and leaders must consider the following points to manage workforce diversity effectively in the IT companies.

- Identify the organization's need for an inclusive and harmonious workplace, have a clear vision of what the organization wants to achieve in diversity management and set out the implementation plan for diversity strategy.
- Organizations which create an inclusive and harmonious environment enhance their reputation with job seekers, allowing them to attract the best workers in the market.
- Employees who feel included, valued and rewarded are more engaged and motivated. In a worldwide survey of 3 million employees on diversity, employee satisfaction and organizational performance, it was found that creating an inclusive and harmonious environment was a key driver in employee engagement and commitment.
- Greater employee engagement leads to reduced turnover. A study conducted by Gallup Management Group during 2008 in the United States revealed that engaged employees had 51% lower turnover on average.
- Senior management plays three key roles in building an inclusive and harmonious workplace:
 - Demonstrate commitment and accountability by identifying relevant performance measures in diversity management and monitoring progress regularly and assigning of resources (e.g. personnel, budget) to diversity management initiatives.
 - Communicate the importance of an inclusive and harmonious workplace to set the tone for the organization. This can be articulated during management meetings, company events, or informal sessions with employees.
 - Be a role model for behaviour expected of managers and employees by participating actively in initiatives to promote an inclusive and harmonious workplace (e.g. training, workplace activities, employee network groups, etc.), and living the organization values and demonstrating inclusive behavior.

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