



“Workforce Diversity: A Catalyst for Enhanced Performance in University Settings”

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ABSTRACT

Workforce diversity is a cornerstone as it helps the organization to work effectively and efficiently. With globalization, diversity has become a strategic imperative in organizations. It has increased to a great extent. The current study investigated the nuanced impact of primary dimensions of diversity and workforce on the organizational performance in the universities of Lahore. A survey questionnaire was administered using 5-point Likert scale to gather data from 150 employees which was analyzed on SPSS. The findings indicated that workforce diversity has a positive impact on the performance of an organization along with the primary dimensions i.e. gender, age and ethnicity that were also found to be positively correlated to organizational performance. This study critically contributes to the research literature in Pakistan by bridging the gap and studies repercussions of workforce diversity in education sector.

Introduction:

Globalization is one of the crucial factors in 21st century bringing nations and cultures together promoting international trade, economic welfare, entrepreneurship, business investments, social exchange, economic growth and competitive advantage (Khanal et al. 2024). In addition to this, technology has tossed globalization by connecting individuals and global markets that has resulted in increased immigration to developed countries like UK, USA, Canada enriching them with a great workforce while creating job challenges for locals in developing countries leading to brain drain. Furthermore, globalization has hyped up the business and corporate world maximizing financial growth and diversity (Kamoche & Wood, 2023).

Diversity is heterogeneous which involves a way an individual perceives himself and others as it brings varieties of knowledge, skills, experiences, cultures, traditions and ethnicity in an organization. It has become one of the complex factors in organizations in terms of adaptability and communication while making it the most competitive factor at the same time to improve organizational performance. Despite being complex, diversity is pivotal in organizations and institutes that support them in terms of change, creativity, efficiency and experience (Baleviciene, 2021). In organization, one of the fundamental factors in today's world is embracing diversity and managing it to enhance corporate efficiency (Masanja & Mwita, 2021).

Organizational performance typically indicates how a particular workforce works together in order to achieve same goals and objectives. Organizational performance refers the way individuals in a particular organization efficiently utilize minimum resources to gain maximum output (Haeri,

2013). Moreover, organizational performance is high when all the members from diverse backgrounds work in harmony and collaborative manner to achieve a particular goal resulting in high financial outcomes, market and stakeholder values.

Problem Statement:

Previously researches which have been conducted, studied workforce diversity strategies and employee performance but few focused on influence of workforce diversity on organizational performance. This research fills a small gap and studies repercussions of workforce diversity in university settings.

Purpose of the Study:

This study seeks to investigate the effect of employee diversity on organizational performance with a view about the positive and negative effects of this relationship. It focuses on primary diversity dimensions – age, gender, and culture -to assess their impact on organizational performance. The objectives were to explore the relationship between gender, age, ethnicity, and organizational performance, and assessing the impact of workforce diversity on organizational performance of universities in Lahore. Globalization as well as changing demographics have brought about unevenly diverse workforces, rendering this research quite pertinent. It is studied that when this diversity is managed in an effective manner, it leads to higher job satisfaction and improves organization performance (Khan et al., 2020).

Literature Review:

Concept of Diversity:

Diversity involves the differences and variations in the perceptions, opinions and ideas of individuals due to distinct cultures and social backgrounds (Kaur et al., 2022). In the words of Costa, (2023) the concept of diversity involves the recognition

and acceptance of individual differences i.e. ethnic, economical, racial, sexual and social statuses and celebrating them which promote inclusivity and the sense of belonging that are the crucial elements of diversity. Furthermore, understanding diversity involves positive aspects as it initiates change and heterogeneity whereas; negative aspect as it gives rise to disputes (Tjimuku, & Atiku 2024). Kaur, Mishra and Farooqi, (2022) described diversity as the divergence of one's social and cultural ideas, opinions, perceptions and viewpoints which exist together in an organization. Diversity is a miscellaneous set of perceptions, opinions, ideas, knowledge, beliefs and backgrounds with which people interact with their surroundings (Qabir & Kun, 2023). However, in organizational context, diversity of workforce refers to the varied group of people in terms of age, gender, cultural and ethnic backgrounds and educational backgrounds (Krishnan, 2020).

Age, gender and ethnic diversity:

Diversity includes all the visible and non-visible characteristics of an individual which makes him unique. Age, gender, ethnicity, physical and sexual attributes are fixed or primary dimensions of diversity that can be immediately noticed and help the individual to perceive their environment (Costa, 2023; Aliyu & Abubakar, 2024). Gender diversity represents an individual's internal experience of their gender being male or female (Timmons & Airton, 2023). People are more attracted to the organizations that values diversity especially in terms of gender and promote inclusivity (Mousa, 2021; Kundu & Mor 2017). Workforce usually consists of men and women from different cultures and backgrounds that make it very challenging for organizations to maintain inclusivity and justice (Bapuji et al., 2020). This is mainly because women are marginalized and does not receive appreciation, pay or high

positions as men in most organizations (Leslie & Flynn, 2022). Now days, many diversity initiatives are being taken to reduce bias and injustice against gender (women and minorities) in organizations that has positively affected organizational performance (Leslie & Flynn, 2022; Nishii et al., 2018).

Ethnic diversity refers to the individual's background, culture, beliefs, faith, language, nationality, race and age (Morris, 2023). For organizations, managing ethnic or cultural diversity is a prime concern (Morris, 2023). Aliyu and Abubakar, (2024) in their research emphasized that acceptance and respect are the core aspects of cultural diversity which includes that everyone in an organization belong to a different culture and background and are unique in their own way. Therefore, managing workforce diversity is the crucial factor in an organization to reduce differences and conflicts that has paved way for the innovative ideas and opportunities (Spanos, 2022).

Age diversity refers to an individual's chronological age, their behaviors and interest in that specific age (Kunze et al., 2011). Literature review indicated that age diversity also include reduced cognitive abilities (Salthouse, 2019). Many researchers suggest that age diversity involves abstract and novel reasoning abilities, concentration span and memory (Salthouse, 2019; Li et al.; 2021). Li et al., (2021) further explained that young individuals in a workforce tend to handle new situations and accept innovative ideas and solution then older employees. On the contrary, older employees have ability to supervise organizational environments and workforce performance and make connections based on their experiences (Kim & Mullins; Arif et al. 2017). A research conducted by Burmeister et al. (2020) stated that aged employees tend to concentrate

more on interpersonal relations and emotional balance whereas; young employees concentrate on the gathering information and innovative solutions and making new connections to increase their source of information.

Concept of Organizational Performance

In the words of Doval, (2020) organizational performance refers to the original outcomes of the organization that are measured against company's objectives, goals and visions. Gutterman, (2023) defined organizational performance as capability of a corporate body to achieve its financial goals by utilizing its available resources in an effective and efficient manner. despite being the most important and discussed topic, it is not possible to clearly define organizational performance because it includes many aspects like profits, growth, finances and funds, workforce, strategies and agendas and constantly changing goals and objectives (Gutterman, 2023). Literature suggests that performance is very subjective and is measured against different factors (Iuliana & Maria, 2016). In this context, Bourguignon (2000) defined performance as fulfilling company's objectives and goals. Gutterman, (2023) referred performance as a miscellaneous construct which involves various dimensions of an organization such as funding, profits, legitimacy, strategies and many more. Performance includes an ambitious and competitive state which is acquired by the productive and effective strategies of an organization (Doval, 2020; Dragomir & Pânzaru, 2014). Gutterman, (2023) further argued that people sometimes perceive productivity and performance as same. However, productivity only includes the amount of work done by an organization rather than measured against different dimensions.

Internal and External Factors of an Organization

Environment has a direct or indirect effect on the strategies made and implemented by an organization as it greatly influences processes and outcomes achieved by an organization (Fauzi et al., 2020). Strategies, structure, technology, leadership, development, workforce and quality are the internal factors of an organization. Fauzi et al. (2020) in their research elaborated that development, innovation and research, company's structure, strategy, management and production, finances, knowledge, skills, experience and abilities of a workforce have a major role in deciding strength and weakness of an organization. Moreover, internal factors also include physical factors like technology, location, equipment, factories and materials that influence the company's performance and sustainability in the market (Fauzi et al., 2020). Literature suggested that organizational structure is very crucial as it involves coordination, task division, rules, procedures and strategies that help the company to take decisions necessary to meet market standards (Fauzi et al., 2020). Additionally, human resource in an organization determines the strategies, management and administration to achieve desired objectives and goals (Yilmaz & Bulut, 2015). Similarly, Hussain et al., (2023) in their research described that organizational culture greatly impact its performance as it deals and employee behaviors and strive to drive them away from undesired behaviors. On contrary, good leadership styles are essential as it ultimately defines the organizational victory (Mokgolo et al., 2012).

On the other hand, clients, suppliers, competitors, political, economic, social, technological and environmental factors are external factors of an organization that effects its performance. These external factors are uncontrollable and have a direct impact on organizational performance (Sadiku, 2022). Organization's ability to

work effectively and efficiently is based on its ability to adapt in the environment it functions (Chitechi, 2014). Political factor such as taxes effect the organization's profit and budget, economic factors such as unemployment, inflation etc effect company's strategies and planning whereas, environmental factors like clients, competitors also positively or negatively affect the organization's culture environment and decision-making (Sadiku, 2022).

Organizational Performance Measurement Model

Organizational performance can be measured through different perspectives which include accounting, strategic measurement or entrepreneurship. Empirical evidence suggested that in order to measure past/historical performance or present and

Table 1: Gender Diversity and Organizational Performance for University A

		GDTIP	OPTIP
GDTIP	Pearson	1	-.259*
	Correlation		.025
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	75	75
OPTIP	Pearson	-.259*	1
	Correlation		.025
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	75	75

future performance the most commonly used and best model is balanced scorecard model developed by Kaplan (1980). The BSC is a multifaceted perspective of organizational performance that involves workforce skills, company's assets, market rates and shares, productivity and quality, performance of stakeholders and client satisfaction while considering the possible future opportunities that have not been funded yet (Guttermann, 2023).

Methodology

Quantitative research design was employed to investigate the effect of workforce diversity on organizational performance which involves numerical

analysis and description of data (Eyisi, 2016) and its results can be generalized to larger population (Rahman, 2016).

Sample Size and Sampling Technique:

150 employees from two universities of Lahore make up the sample size for this research and for this purpose convenience sampling technique was used which involves selecting participants from based on the ease of the researcher (Golzar et al. 2022).

Research Tool and Data Collection:

A survey questionnaire was administered comprising of three sections i.e. 1) demographic variables 2) primary dimensions of diversity 3) effect of primary dimensions of diversity and workforce diversity on the performance of organization to collect data. In the present research age diversity, gender diversity and ethnic diversity are independent variables whereas, organizational performance is dependent variable. The data collected were analyzed on SPSS along with correlation test to identify relationship between two variables and regression test to identify the relationship of dependent variable with one or more independent variable.

Results: University A

The result shows that there is a significant positive relation (.025) between gender diversity and organizational performance.

Table 2: Age Diversity and Organizational Performance for University A

		ADTIP	OPTIP
ADTIP	Pearson	1	.126
	Correlation		.283
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	75	75
OPTIP	Pearson	.126	1
	Correlation		.283
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	75	75

The result in the above table 2 shows that there is a positive but not significant relation

(.283) between Age diversity and organizational performance.

Table 3: Ethnic Diversity and Organizational Performance for University A

		EDTIP	OPTIP
EDTIP	Pearson	1	.317**
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.006
	N	75	75
OPTIP	Pearson	.317**	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	
	N	75	75

The result in the above table 3 shows that there is a positive relation (.006) between Ethnic diversity and organizational performance.

Table 4: Workforce Diversity and Organizational Performance for University A

		DIVERSITY	OPTIP
DIVERSITY	Pearson	1	.164
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.160
	N	75	75
OPTIP	Pearson	.164	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.160	
	N	75	75

The result in the above table 4 shows that there is a positive relation (.160) between workforce diversity and organizational performance.

Table 5: Regression Analysis

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	B	F	Sig
.164	.027	.013	38.316	2.011	.160

The above table 5 shows results for regression analysis. The value of R Square is 0.027 / 2.7% which means that the interdependency of both the variables is low. The relationship between both the variables is weak because there are many factors other than diversity that affect an organization's performance such as knowledge management, organizational innovation and leadership style. Diversity is one of these factors but cannot be the only factor that affects organizational performance.

2. Results for University B

Table 6: Gender Diversity and Organizational Performance for University B

		GDTIP	OPTIP
GDTIP	Pearson	1	.247*
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.033
	N	75	75
OPTIP	Pearson	.247*	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.033	
	N	75	75

The result in the above table 6 shows that there is a positive relation (.033) between gender diversity and organizational performance.

Table 7: Age Diversity and Organizational Performance for University B

		ADTIP	OPTIP
ADTIP	Pearson	1	.449**
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	75	75
OPTIP	Pearson	.449**	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	75	75

The result in table 7 shows that there is a positive relation (.000) between age diversity and organizational performance.

Table 8: Ethnic Diversity and Organizational Performance for University B

		EDTIP	OPTIP
EDTIP	Pearson	1	-.169
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.148
	N	75	75
OPTIP	Pearson	-.169	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.148	
	N	75	75

The result in the table 8 shows that there is a positive relation (.006) between Ethnic diversity and organizational performance.

Table 9: Workforce Diversity and Organizational Performance for University B

		DIVERSITY	OPTIP
DIVERSITY	Pearson	1	.243*
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.036
	N	75	75
OPTIP	Pearson	.243*	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.036	
	N	75	75

The result in the table 9 shows that there is a significant positive relation (.036) between workforce diversity and organizational performance.

Table 10: Regression Analysis

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	B	F	Sig
.243	.059	.046	28.991	4.586	.036

The value of R Square is 0.059 / 5.9 % which means that the interdependency of both the variables is low. The relationship between both the variables is weak because there are many factors other than diversity that affect an organization's performance such as knowledge management, organizational innovation and leadership style. Diversity is one of these factors but cannot be the only factor that affects organizational performance.

Discussion:

This research explored five research questions to understand the importance of workforce diversity on organizational performance in university settings. This research extended the literature by specifically identifying the relationship of primary dimensions of workforce diversity i.e. age, gender and culture on organizational performance.

The first research question was proposed to understand the relationship between gender and organizational performance. The findings of the research stipulated that gender diversity is positively correlated to organizational performance and majority of respondents agreed that they are treated fairly and given equal opportunities despite their gender in their organizations. The findings align with the prior researches where it was found that gender diversity is positively correlated to organizational performance (Rafaqat et al., 2022; Ali et al., 2014). Moreover, Yilmaz et al., (2022) in their research found employees are given fair and equal opportunities in organizations despite their gender (women leadership, flexible views).

The second research question was to explore the relationship between age and organizational performance. The findings indicated that age diversity is positively related to organizational performance and majority of respondents agreed that their organization include people belonging to different age groups. Echoing similar results were found in a research conducted by Rafaqat et al., (2022); Karimi and Busolo, (2019); Baporikar, (2021) that age diversity is positively related to organizational performance as it boosts efficiency, productivity, creativeness and profitability of an organization. Similarly, Syakhroza et al., (2021) in their research proved that organizations prefer to hire people of different ages as it helps to maintain positive

impact in top management and balanced interactions among employees.

The third research question was to understand the relationship between ethnicity and organizational performance. The findings emerged indicated that ethnicity is positively correlated to organizational performance and majority organizations have positive perceptions about ethnic diversity and considered hiring people from different ethnicities. The findings align with the results of the research conducted by Setati et al., (2019); Kirop and Wanjere, (2017) who found that ethnic diversity positively affect workforce and organizational performance. Additionally, Kirop and Wanjere, (2017) elaborated that organization positively accept people belonging to different ethnicities as they bring fresh perspectives and innovative ideas in their organization.

The fourth research question was proposed to investigate how workforce diversity in universities of Lahore influence organizational performance. The findings depicted that majority of the respondents acknowledged that due to workforce diversity; they were able to develop innovative strategies and feel competent. Qabir and Kun, (2023) also found similar results that diverse workforce go through distinct organizational dynamics that ultimately boosts organizational performance.

The fifth research question determined whether workforce diversity positively affect organizational performance. The findings disclosed that workforce diversity does have a positive effect on performance, growth and development of an organization. The outcomes resonate with the research conducted by Manoharan and Singal, (2017) that workforce diversity positively affect organizational performance when managed properly.

Conclusion:

In order to evaluate organizational performance, workforce diversity is a crucial element that determines company's strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, in organizations, it is very necessary to manage diversity in an effective manner to maintain balance and achieve goals successfully. Moreover, when employee sees that organization manages diversity efficiently he/she perceives it positively and ultimately enhances organizational performance and image. However, it is to be noted that without effective and efficient management of workforce diversity there is no guarantee that diversity positively affects company's performance. By going through the literature review and analysis of both the universities it can be concluded that workforce diversity does have a positive impact on organizational performance, growth and development. The analysis and the literature review also indicate significant positive impact of primary dimensions of diversity on organizational performance. Literature review defends the argument that gender diversity in an organization has a positive influence on organization's performance. It was also concluded that age, gender, and ethnicity are positively correlated to organizational performance. Moreover, the employees of both the universities have positive perception regarding their institutions and they believe that their institutions facilitate and promote diversity at all levels. They also believe that primary dimensions of diversity which are gender, age and ethnicity contribute in organizational performance in different ways.

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