Indian Employees and Workplace Diversity: A Study on Attitudinal Elements

Dr. S.M. Shariq Abbas Head, Department of Business Administration Yobe State University Nigeria

Abstract

India is a vast, diverse and big economy and many studies in the past have been done on the issue of workplace diversity in India and for that matter world. An apt understanding of the subject can be very helpful in proper functioning of contemporary business organizations. Workplace diversity, its awareness level among employees and value being appended to diversity management in Indian organizations is the underlying purpose of this paper. Various demographic and regional dependant variables are tested to understand the attitudinal element of employees working in different Indian organizations of Northern and Eastern parts of India. The non-experimental, descriptive, and quantitative research design with stratified random sampling technique is employed in the present research. The results and hypotheses testing of the were interpreted using statistical techniques like Cronbach's Alpha, Pearson Correlation, One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and associated procedures like Levene Statistics, post hoc Games-Howell Test and Pearson Chi Square Test. The findings highlight that age, education, income, work experience have significant differences in attitude toward workplace diversity among the different sets of employees tested, nevertheless gender, marital status and region have none. Further, it was found that employees are well acquainted with the concept of diversity management, with Northern India having more diverse people working in organizations who seem to be less tolerant with people wearing different dresses and feel it is an obligation of the managers to manage diversity as compared to employees in Eastern part. Both regions perceive that diversity is valued in their organizations and immense percentages here are however not familiar with procedures relating to discrimination complaints.

Keyword:

Workplace, Diversity, Employees, Attitude, Organizations

Introduction

An understanding of diversity, its management and its effect on the working of organization is very important for contemporary managers operating in a country like India. India is home to a number of languages, religious denominations, dresses, music, caste, diverse and far off regions, different sexual orientations which is quite often than

not concealed from the prying eyes, people having different dietary laws and the likes. These differences may make people like or dislike each other, but one phenomenon is for sure, people work at a same place with the groups at times very different from them.

According to Wentling & Palma-Rivas (2000) diversity refers to the co-existence of employees from various socio-cultural backgrounds within the company. It takes account of cultural variables such as race, gender, age, colour, physical ability, ethnicity, etc. The authors also talk about the broader definition of diversity which consists of national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, values, ethnic culture, education, language, lifestyle, beliefs, physical appearance and economic status.

As Allen et al. (2004) have put it; workforce diversity is capable of bringing competitive advantage as different viewpoints can facilitate unique and innovative approaches to problem-solving, leading to improved organizational performance. Thus the question of the significance of present study can be understood by the fact that it is the ethical deliberation that respect for the individual mutually, procedural fairness and equity among other factors is there (Aminu, 2011) and a positive understanding of diversity can go a long way in addressing these issues.

According to Ozigbo (2011) transformational leadership behaviour should be exhibited by the managers so that the employees have a feeling of trust, admiration, loyalty and respect towards the leaders in supporting the management decision. Thus a culture of diversity in organizations should be encouraged so that one and all in the organization do not feel left behind or neglected. The organizational leaders have to avoid discrimination as it is aptly imperative according to Bass and Avolio (1994) that lofty standards of ethical and moral conduct is exhibited by the managers. Additionally we have to be aware of the fact that disparities which are cultural and racial in nature may contribute to conflicts in the organization (Havenga, 2002). It can be noted that many of the factors like age, income, marital status among others tested in this paper have affected conflict handling styles among the employees in India (Abbas & Joshi, 2013). It implies that a positive appreciation of organizational diversity can be very helpful in treatment dysfunctional organizational conflict.

The issue of diversity in India is very peculiar and unlike that of the western countries. According to Woodard & Saini (2006), the Indian dialogue on diversity and bias is focused on caste system, women rights, disability, religion and the dominant factor dealt in the present study, regionalism. Much research is done on the variable race as diversity, which focused on positive effect of diversity vis-à-vis race (Watson, Kumar & Michaelsen, 1993; McLeod, Lobel & Cox, 1996) as well as the pessimistic view which talked of

conflict in heterogeneous teams (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Studies have asserted that women at all levels of their work life face hurdles which negatively affect their career (Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989; Tsui et al., 1992; Marlow et. al., 1995). Older the worker, he is more likely to face age bias and inequitable treatment, it has been the result of many researches done in recent years particularly so in late 1990s (Perry & Finkelstein, 1999; Barnes-Farrell et al., 2002, Shore et al., 2003; DeArmond et al., 2006).

Research findings like that of Fernandez (1991) and Cox (1993) suggest that having a diverse workforce leads to increased market share and increased sales to minority-culture groups. Much researcher further point out that harmful outcome of diversity mismanagement is ambiguity, low morale, conflict and tension, confusion and problems of communication which weaken organisational attachment and reduce effectiveness and workforce cohesion (Nemetz, 1996; Robbins, 2001; Chevrier, 2003).

In a study by Watson et al. (1993) the effect of cultural diversity on interaction processes and performance was analyzed with 173 undergraduate students on the basis of ethnic and national differences. The results of the study were that culturally diverse groups were more effective in tasks like identifying problem perspectives and generating solution alternatives as compared to homogeneous groups. Cordero et al. (1996) additionally suggest that, for more routine tasks homogeneity of group is better and for more complex and interdependent tasks heterogeneity is preferred. Thus diversity in workforce benefits complex assignments which necessitates higher echelon of innovation, creative thinking, and problem-solving skills (Dwyer et al. 2003; Jackson 1992).

Further, an investigation done by Nemeth (1986) found minority groups to be more creative and innovative. A case study research in large public sector organizations was done to examine the relationship between race/ethnic and gender identities, perceived discrimination, job satisfaction, interpersonal relationships, and attitudes toward workplace diversity and diversity management initiatives. The findings of the study suggested that women and ethnic-minority employees were more open to diversity management initiatives, perceived greater discrimination, further they accounted for a lesser amount of job satisfaction and less satisfying interpersonal relationships than their white male colleagues (Soni, 2000).

The assessment of differences in work climate perceptions and levels of job satisfaction between different ethnic groups, 268 local government employees in New Mexico put forward the results that attitudes towards diversity are moderated by the ethnic identities of employees (Rubaii-Barrett & Beck 1993). Built on the review of past researches the following conceptual framework was structured which

is discussed in the next section.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the present study theorizes

that demographic independent variables of age, gender, income, marital status, education, work experience and region of the respondents would affect their attitude towards the organizational diversity.

Age

Gender

Attitude Towards

Organizational

Diversity

Marital Status

Education

Work Experience

Region

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

Studies of the past have indicated that these factors do effect organizations, thus the present framework is tested in the course of the study.

Objectives

The study at hand was undertaken to understand the diversity awareness level of the employees and the value being attached to the diversity management in Indian organizations. Further the attitudinal dimension of the employees in the Northern and Eastern parts of India -which is separated by more than 1000 kilometers, hundreds of dialects/languages, scores of sub-cultures-is also analysed in the present study. A comparative study is done on the issue of attitude towards diversity on the basis of factor like region from which employees belong or variables like age, gender, marital status, income, work experience and the educational attainment of the respondents of the said areas.

Statement of Hypotheses

On the basis of discussion presented in the conceptual framework, following null hypotheses were tested in line with the current study.

- H0. Younger employees do not have positive attitude towards workplace diversity.
- H0. There is no significant difference in attitude between bachelors and masters degree holders towards workplace diversity.
- H0. There is no significant difference between higher and lower income employees vis-à-vis workplace diversity.
- H0. There is a no significant difference among employees with different income group vis-à-vis workplace diversity.
- H0. There is no significant difference between experienced and less experienced employees towards organizational diversity.
- H0. Gender, marital status and region have no significant affect on attitude of employees towards workplace diversity.

Methodology

Research Design and Sample

The present study employs a non-experimental, descriptive, and quantitative research design with primary data of a

sample size 136 -administered through a questionnaire including a Likert type scale-which was selected after rejecting 51 samples due to various discrepancies and 24 were never returned, the response rate being 64.45%. The selected employees were from various industries engaged in financial, human resource management, information technology (IT) and marketing sectors.

Stratified random sampling of two strata, the samples from Northern India, including cities of Delhi, Ghaziabad, Noida and Meerut and those of Eastern Indian cities of Kolkata, Asansol and Murshidabad was used to collect data, randomly selected. Out of total sample, 77.2% were males, 22.8% females, 69.9% in age group 25-30 years, with majority having income ranging from INR 15-50000 (79.4%). Most of the employees are single (60.3%), having bachelor's degree (56.6%) with 6.48 years average work experience, 28.7% were from northern and 71.3% from the eastern region of India. Statistical Package Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16 was used for analysis of data.

Instrumentation

Reliability Statistics and other Statistical Tools

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Attitude Towards Diversity	.603	16

Following a pilot study done on 31 samples to pretest and validate the instrument, a 16 point Likert Type Scale was developed to understand the attitude of respondent vis-à-vis diversity in their organizations. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient .603 was more than that suggested as per the standards of Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) for the tool; construct with adequate reliability is presented in table 1, which is more than the acceptable limit of 0.50. Further statistical analysis was done through various statistical

methods like Pearson Correlation, One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and associated procedures like Levene Statistics, post hoc Games-Howell Test, Pearson Chi Square Test and percentages to test the hypotheses and reach at other significant findings of the study.

Hypotheses Testing and Findings

Attitude of employees towards workplace diversity

Table 2. Correlations Matrix

		Age	Education	Income	Experience	Mean Score
Age	Pearson Correlation	1	.216*	.511**	.667**	091
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.011	.000	.000	.021
	N	136	136	136	136	136
Education	Pearson Correlation	.216*	1	110	.021	.075
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	:	.201	.811	.387
	N	136	136	136	136	136
Income	Pearson Correlation	.511**	110	1	.694**	111
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.201		.000	.000
	N	136	136	136	136	136

Experience	Pearson Correlation	.667**	.021	.694**	1	-,149
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.811	.000		.002
	N	136	136	136	136	136
Mean Score	Pearson Correlation	091	.075	111	149	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.021	.387	.000	.002	Í
1	N	136	136	136	136	136

^{*.} Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Age

Table 2 presents the correlation matrix for the various factors under the purview of the study vis-à-vis organizational diversity. Older employees have less favourable attitude towards organizational diversity as compared to their younger counterparts. It can be statistically established through Pearson negative correlation and significance level .021 (r= -.091, p<0.05). The null hypothesis that younger employees do not have positive attitude towards workplace diversity is therefore rejected.

Education

Bachelors and masters degree holders were the two types of respondents included in the study and Pearson chi square value of 6.297, df 2 asymptotic significance .043 (p<.05) establishes a significant difference between these two levels of educational attainment when it comes to attitude. Further, Pearson correlation establishes a significant relationship

between educational level and attitude of respondents for organizational diversity with significance level of .011 (r=.075, p<0.05). It implies that more the education, less is the favorable attitude towards diversity. Thus null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in attitude between bachelors and masters degree holders towards workplace diversity is rejected.

Income

Mean score (r= -.111, p<0.05) and significance level .000 was found to be having highly significant negative correlation with income of the employees, which means a person having more income would have less favourable attitude towards diversity as compared to their poorer counterparts. Therefore the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between higher and lower income employees vis-à-vis workplace diversity stands rejected.

Different Income Groups

Table 3. ANOVA

Mean Score					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.299	3	.100	.646	.587
Within Groups	20.341	132	.154		
Total	20.640	135			

^{**.} Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

An analysis of table 3 reveal that there is no significant difference among different income groups as regards to workplace diversity as F (3,132) = .646, p>.05. At the outset, the null hypothesis that there is a no significant difference among employees with different income group vis-à-vis

workplace diversity stands rejected. Levene statistic (6.648), presented in table 4 further rejects the assumption that group variances are equal as .000 significance show that variances of the four income groups are significantly different (p < 0.05).

Table 4. Test of Homogeneity of Variances Mean Score

Levene Statistic	df1 df2		Sig.
6.648	3	132	.000

Games-Howell test was accordingly applied after having the result that variances are not homogeneous, with an assumption that there is no homogeneity of variances. The results of the test are revealed in table 5 and with the rational that each group of subjects is compared with all of the remaining groups. For each pair of income groups the difference between group means is displayed along with the standard error of that difference, the significance level of that difference and a 95% confidence interval.

Games-Howell post hoc procedure evaluated attitude towards workplace diversity of employees among various income brackets. Analyzing the result, a non significant difference vis-à-vis workplace diversity is observed between those employees who earn less than INR 15000 and

INR 15-30000, INR 15-30000 and INR 30-50000, INR 15-30000 and those having more than INR 50000 and INR 30-50000 and those earning more than INR 50000. Nonetheless income brackets INR 15000 and INR 30-50000 with significance level .003 (p<.05) have a significant difference in attitude towards workplace diversity. Further, with significance level .009 (p<.05), income cohort INR 15000 and those who gross more than INR 50000, it can be established that there is significant difference in their attitude towards workplace diversity. Therefore the null hypothesis that there is a no significant difference among employees with different income groups vis-à-vis workplace diversity is rejected for only last two sets income groups discussed above.

Table 5. Multiple Comparisons

Mean Score Games-Howell						
		Mean			95% Confide	nce Interval
(I) income	(J) income	Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Less than 15000	15-30000	.102	.112	.798	20	.40
	30-50000	.139	.092	.003	11	.39
	More than 50000	.158	.086	.009	09	.40
15-30000	Less than 15000	102	.112	.798	40	.20
	30-50000	.037	.079	.966	17	.24
	More than 50000	.056	.072	.867	14	.25

30-50000	Less than 15000	139	.092	.003	39	.11
	15-30000	037	.079	.966	24	.17
	More than 50000	.019	.032	.939	07	.10
More than 50000	Less than 15000	158	.086	.009	40	.09
	15-30000	056	.072	.867	25	.14
	30-50000	019	.032	.939	10	.07

Experience

Experience of employee working in the organizations had a statistically negative correlation with the mean score (r= .149, p<0.05) and significance level .002, implies that an experienced staff member across the samples would have less favourable attitude towards diversity in the organization

and vice versa. Therefore the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between experienced and less experienced employees towards organizational diversity is rejected.

Gender, Marital Status and Region

S no.	Factor	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
a.	Gender	1.689	2	.430
b.	Marital Status	1.766	2	.414
c.	Region wise No. of valid cases=136	3.198	2	.202

Gender has no role to play as far as attitude towards diversity is concerned. Comparing the male and female sample of the study, Pearson chi-square test reveals that asymptotic significance (2-sided), which displays the p- value .430, Pearson chi-square value of 1.689 with df 2 indicates that there is no significant difference between the two samples statistically. Further, the analysis of marital status of the respondents also shows that there is no statistical difference in the attitudes of married and single employees (p- value .414, Pearson chi-square value of 1.766 with df 2). Additional findings indicate that there is no significant difference in the attitude of respondents with reference to

diversity among those of North Region and East Region indicated by p- value .202, Pearson chi-square value of 3.198 with df 2 (refer table 6). The null hypothesis that gender, marital status and region have no significant affect on attitude of employees towards workplace diversity in accepted.

Employees' awareness about Workplace Diversity

The employees' understanding on the issues of workplace diversity is addressed in this section. Table 7 displays Pearson chi square test results of the analysis and discussions are thereafter.

Table 7. Multiple Comparisons Pearson Chi Square Test Results

S no.	Factor	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
a.	Attitude about diverse culture	.443	1	.506
b.	Familiarity with Diversity Management	3.999	1	.046
c.	Cultural diversity within Organizations	.906	1	.341

d.	Standard Dress Code	10.661	1	.001
e.	Responsibility of the managers to manage diversity	38.589	1	.000
f.	Diversity valued in organizations	.005	1	.943
g.	Familiarity with discrimination complaints Procedures	.541	1	.462
	No. of valid cases=136			

Attitude about diverse culture at workplace

In Eastern region the employees are more positive about diversity in workplace as compared to their counterparts in the northern region. Pearson chi-square test reveals that asymptotic significance (2-sided), which displays the p-value .506, Pearson chi-square value of .443 with degree of freedom 1 indicates that there is no significant difference between the two samples, it statistically also confirms to hypothesis test results mentioned elsewhere.

Familiarity with Diversity Management

Familiarity with Diversity Management was assessed between the employees of the Northern region and Eastern Region. A large majority among the North (94.9%) and East (81.4%) are aware of the concept. Moreover, chi-square test shows a significant difference in awareness level of diversity management concept among the people of the said regions with significance level of .046 (p<0.05), Pearson chi-square value = 3.999, df 1.

Cultural diversity within Organisations

In North people from different cultures are working in organizations (84.6%) which is more than that of Eastern region (77.3%), the difference may be due to the craze in professionals to work in National Capital Region (NCR) which is in the North. Though statistically speaking there is no significant difference between the two regions vis-à-vis of different culture people working in these organizations.

Standard Dress Code

In Northern region almost half of the respondents (51.3%) said that standard dress code is followed in their organizations while in sharp contrast only 22.7% of the respondents in the Eastern region were affirmative which indicates that people in this area are more tolerant to different dresses wore by the employees. The asymptotic significance at .001 (p<.05) indicates a significant difference in the two sets of respondents vis-à-vis the dress (Pearson chi sq. value 10.661, df 1).

Responsibility of the managers to manage diversity

The employees of the North overwhelmingly at 94.9% put onus of managing the diversity on the managers while in East respondents consider it to be the collective responsibility of all the people working in an organization to

manage diversity at 63.9%. There is a highly significant difference between the respondents of these two regions as can be ascertained by asymptotic significance of .000 (p<.05) Pearson Chi square value being 38.589, df 1.

Diversity Valued

Very big majority of respondents in both the regions at 87.2% (North) and 87.6% (East) are in view that diversity is valued and cultivated in their organizations.

Familiarity with Discrimination Complaints Procedures

The knowledge of discrimination complaints procedures is almost same for North and East regions where at 51.3% and 44.3% respectively affirmed for the same, nonetheless a vast percentage of respondents are not aware of the same.

Conclusion

North India has more culturally diverse workforce as compared to the Eastern part as can be established in the present study. Additionally, many interesting findings have emerged in the paper at hand; the testimonies to the fact is that older/experienced, higher earning and more educated employees dislike diversity in organizations as compared to the younger/less experienced, lower educated workers who earn less.

Nonetheless some relief can be sought in the findings that an employee irrespective of the fact that he/she is male or female, is married or single or is from Northern or the Eastern part of India have no affect on their attitude towards organizational diversity. Further familiarity with the concept of diversity management is another positive indicator among the employees of different tested regions in India as majority are known to the concept; however the diversity complaint procedure is not well understood among the employees. Another exciting result is that employees in East India are more liberal to different dresses worn by the employees in their organizations as compared to their counterparts in the North indicating an attitude which more towards positive side vis-à-vis organizational diversity.

Nevertheless employees in both the areas recognize that diversity is valued in their organizations. Interestingly workers in Eastern part of India believe that it is collective responsibility of all employees to manage diversity in their organizations, which is in sharp contrast to their Northern equivalents. All these findings can propel the future

researches in the field of organizational diversity and its management by testing the factors and areas which were not explored here due to time and financial constraints. Exclusive comparative studies on perception and attitude towards organizational diversity can also be affected among an assortment of businesses/organizations of different countries or for that matter various economic systems, sky is the limit.

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