



Workplace Diversity and Inclusion: The Role of Organizational Culture

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Abstract

Workplace diversity and inclusion (D&I) have become critical drivers of innovation, employee well-being, and organizational performance. The success of D&I efforts, however, depends significantly on the dominant organizational culture, which influences employee attitudes, behaviors, and inclusivity-related policies. This research explores the complex relationship between organizational culture and workplace diversity and inclusion, investigating how cultural values, leadership, and HR policies affect the success of diversity efforts. Based on a comprehensive literature review, case studies, and empirical studies, this research emphasizes the most important aspects of an inclusive organizational culture, including leadership commitment, psychological safety, fair hiring practices, and open communication. It also examines typical obstacles to inclusivity, such as unconscious biases, resistance to change, and structural disparities in organizations. The study also examines the contribution of transformational leadership and corporate social responsibility (CSR) in fostering a positive cultural change towards inclusivity. Findings indicate that organizations with a robust, inclusive culture have more engaged employees, better team collaboration, and better organizational reputation. In contrast, firms that do not embed diversity and inclusion into their cultural narrative stand to see greater turnover, intra-workplace conflict, and diminished innovation. The research concludes by offering strategic recommendations to organizations on how to create and maintain a culture that proactively supports diversity and inclusion through leadership commitment, customized training programs, and inclusive policy making.

Key Words: Diversity, inclusion, organizational culture, leadership, employee engagement, workplace equity, innovation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's business and economic environment, diversity and inclusion (D&I) at the workplace have become core building blocks of organizational success, social justice, and long-term business growth. With companies growing globally and employees becoming more diverse, organizations need to move beyond simple diversity compliance with quotas and work actively to create inclusive cultures that leverage the competencies of diverse backgrounds, viewpoints, and experiences. Diversity includes variations of race, gender, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status, and inclusion verifies that all employees across identity feel respected, valued, and enabled to contribute at their fullest potential. The effectiveness of D&I programs, however, relies substantially on the cultural context of an organization, which defines decision-making, interpersonal relationships, and leadership priorities. Organizational culture is the common values, beliefs, and practices that determine a company's identity and impact workplace behaviors. A culture based on equity, respect, and psychological safety creates a workplace where diversity can flourish, resulting in increased innovation, employee engagement, and business performance. Firms like Google, Microsoft, and Accenture have taken cognizance of this and embedded inclusive values within their corporate culture through systematic policies, employee resource groups (ERGs), and leadership accountability mechanisms to foster diversity. In contrast, companies that do not correlate D&I with their organizational culture stand the risk of driving employees away, perpetuating systemized inequalities, and undermining their corporate image. Organizational leadership has a fundamental role in creating organizational culture. McKinsey & Company research has persistently shown that diverse executive boards financially outperform their less diverse peers. Likewise, World Economic Forum (WEF) reports emphasize that inclusive leadership improves decision-making, employee retention, and business resilience. Great leaders not only advocate for D&I policies but also ensure their enforcement through open hiring processes, unbiased performance assessment, and equal career development opportunities. In spite of international efforts towards diversity in the workplace, there are still major obstacles. Structural inequality, unconscious bias, and tokenism are still holding back progress. Most organizations practice per formative diversity—embracing surface-level practices without confronting root cultural challenges. The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the United Nations Global Compact have both highlighted that in the absence of accountability and systemic transformation, D&I initiatives are ineffective. In addition, resistance to change within historically homogeneous industries like finance and technology is an impediment to developing truly inclusive workplaces. Governments and international institutions have launched frameworks and policies for supporting workplace diversity and inclusion. The European Union's Diversity Charter, signed by thousands of companies, promotes inclusive business practices in Europe. In the United States, the Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) in the Federal Workforce by the Biden Administration requires federal agencies to adopt strategies for diverse representation and workplace equity. Equally, India's Companies Act, 2013, requires diversity at the board level in listed companies, promoting more gender representation at the leadership level. The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) further prioritize workplace equity as a driving force of economic and social development.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Workplace diversity and inclusion (D&I) have moved from being ethical and moral necessities to becoming strategic initiatives for organizations globally. With globalization on the rise, businesses are interacting with increasingly diverse markets, and they need to develop inclusive workplaces that mirror the demographic shifts in society. But true diversity and inclusion go beyond recruitment strategies—it involves a profound cultural shift that seeps into every corner of an organization. In the past, organizations have had problems of exclusion, discrimination, and ingrained biases which have excluded groups from the workforce. The movements of the civil rights of the 20th century, such as the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964, the European Convention on Human Rights, and the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights established the basis for anti-discrimination legislation that guards employees against unjust treatment on grounds of race, gender, religion, and other protected grounds. Even with such legal safeguards in place, inequality in the workplace continues, and conventional corporate hierarchy tends to uphold prevailing power relationships that restrict chances for underrepresented groups. Over the past few decades, increased sensitivity to diversity's benefits has resulted in a change in corporate strategy. Reports by McKinsey & Company and Boston Consulting Group (BCG) have consistently shown that diverse groups of people outperform homogeneous groups in innovation, profitability, and employee engagement. Google, Microsoft, IBM, and Deloitte are among the companies that have instituted robust D&I initiatives, as they realize that diverse thoughts give rise to effective problem-solving and decision-making. Yet even numerous organizations are unable to convert policy into effective cultural change. Governments and international organizations have also played active roles in advancing workplace inclusion. In Europe, the Diversity Charter of the European Commission invites companies to sign up to inclusive workplace policy. In the US, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) administers anti-discrimination laws, and federal and state governments have launched programs like the Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) in the Federal Workforce. In India, the Companies Act, 2013, requires listed companies to have a minimum of one woman as a member of their board of directors, which ensures gender diversity at the leadership level. In the meantime, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have established global standards for corporate social responsibility in promoting diversity and equity within the workplace. In spite of these developments, many challenges persist. Most organizations practice per formative diversity, where they implement shallow policies like diversity quotas without challenging entrenched cultural and structural obstacles. Unconscious biases remain a determinant in hiring, promotion, and leadership opportunities, rendering D&I efforts ineffective. Moreover, sectors like technology, finance, and law continue to experience large gender, racial, and socio-economic disparities, and systemic change is needed.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Current research has probed the complex dynamics between organizational culture and the success of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts. This review distills the newest results, emphasizing prominent contributors and their suggestions regarding how modern organizational practices impact DEI outcomes.



I. Organizational Culture Impact on DEI Initiatives: In a 2024 meta-analysis, scientists **Ferdy Leuhery, Nely Salu Padang, Karyono, Dewi Puspitasari, and Loso Judijanto** studied the impact of DEI initiatives on organizational performance. In their research, they discovered that organizations with DEI high on their cultural agenda saw improved innovation, employee satisfaction, and financial performance. The research highlighted the need for embedding DEI as part of the core organizational culture to achieve these benefits.

II. Strategies for Effective Diversity and Inclusion: A detailed review in 2024 by **Ferdy Leuhery and others** examined different approaches to promoting workplace diversity and inclusion. The results indicated that organizations that adopt systematic DEI strategies, including inclusive leadership development and fair recruitment practices, not only gain from a more vibrant and creative workforce but also develop a culture of belonging and respect, leading to long-term success.

III. Challenges in Implementing DEI Strategies: A 2024 study pointed out the difficulties faced by organizations in adopting change and innovation (C&I) diversity-related strategies. The research found major hindrances such as resistance to change, unconscious bias, and a lack of resources. Overcoming these requires a conscious shift in culture and leadership commitment to ensure an inclusive work environment.

IV. Leadership's Role in Diversity Management: A 2023 conceptual framework by Pakistani researchers discussed the role of leadership in organizational diversity management. The research suggested that leaders who are actively involved and encourage diversity management practices have a direct impact on the organization's diversity approach, thus improving overall performance and inclusivity.

V. Inclusive Workplace Design: A 2023 systematic review examined how the scientific literature and corporate reports have responded to inclusive workplace design and strategies. The article sought to close the research-practice gap by offering insight into designing workplaces that facilitate diversity and inclusion by means of mindful design and organizational practices.

VI. Organizational Culture as a Response to Crises: A 2024 systematic review highlighted organizational culture as a key method of managing crises. The research emphasized the role of a robust and flexible organizational culture in handling unexpected issues, such as diversity and inclusion issues.

VII. Employee Retention and Diversity Climate: Recent research has confirmed that the positive impact of diversity management on employee commitment is frequently mediated by the inclusiveness of organizational culture and transformational leadership. Inclusion-promoting supervisors play a key role in the successful implementation of these initiatives, boosting employee attachment and turnover reduction.

VIII. Current State of Workplace Diversity and Innovation: A 2023 study explored the connection between diversity and innovation performance at work. The research emphasized that diverse teams can improve innovation, but the organizational culture needs to be inclusive in order to utilize the full potential of diversity. The study urged future research to investigate good practices for implementing diversity within the innovation processes.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine how corporate culture affects how well diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) programs work. This goal is to investigate how various organizational cultural frameworks affect DEI program effectiveness.
- To investigate how leadership contributes to the development of an inclusive workplace culture. This study aims to evaluate the ways in which initiatives, policies, and leadership philosophies support or undermine workplace diversity and inclusion.
- To assess corporate and governmental efforts to promote diversity in the workplace. This goal is to identify and evaluate the initiatives and policies that governments and businesses have put in place to improve DEI in organizations.
- To pinpoint problems in putting DEI strategies into practice and provide fixes. This goal looks into things like unconscious prejudices and resistance to change that stand in the way of diversity and inclusion initiatives.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1. Research Design

The research uses a quantitative research design to measure the extent to which organizational culture influences the effectiveness of DEI initiatives in Indian government and private organizations. The study is based on a cross-sectional survey design, using a structured questionnaire to gather data. The analysis aims to identify how organizational cultures affect the perceived DEI initiative effectiveness.

5.2. Population and Sampling

The population of interest includes employees of both government and private sector organizations from different industries in India. The sample involves 763 respondents with greater proportions from the private sector. A stratified random sampling method is employed in order to maintain diversity in terms of age groups, gender, industry type, and years of experience.

5.3. Data Collection Method

Primary data is collected through an online questionnaire, designed to measure:

- Demographic characteristics (age, gender, sector, industry, work experience).
- Organizational culture (supportive, neutral, non-supportive).
- Effectiveness of DEI initiatives based on employee perceptions.

The answers are grouped into predetermined categories to ease statistical analysis.

5.4. Research Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant correlation between organizational culture and the perceived efficacy of DEI initiatives.

Alternative Hypothesis: There exists a significant correlation between organizational culture and the perceived efficacy of DEI initiatives.

5.5. Data Analysis Technique

The data collected is assessed with descriptive statistics and the Chi-Square Test of Independence to investigate whether organizational culture is related to the effectiveness of DEI initiatives. The

contingency table classifies responses into three levels of organizational culture (non-supportive, neutral, and supportive) and two levels of effectiveness of DEI initiatives (not effective, effective).

5.6. Ethical Considerations

- Anonymity and confidentiality of participants are preserved.
- Responses are gathered voluntarily with informed consent. Only anonymous and voluntary responses are recorded.
- The data are utilized purely for research purposes and objectively analyzed.

5.7. Anticipated Result

This study seeks empirical results on organizational culture's effect on the effectiveness of DEI strategies. Findings will guide organizations and policy developers to come up with enhanced diversity and inclusion strategy designs addressing a particular work culture.

6. HYPOTHESIS TESTING

To test the hypothesis that organizational culture has a significant impact on the effectiveness of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, we will use a chi-square test of independence. This test will help determine if there is a significant association between organizational culture and the perceived effectiveness of DEI initiatives.

6.1. Contingency Table

We will create a contingency table with two categorical variables:

6.1.1. Organizational Culture: This will be categorized into three levels based on the responses:

- **Supportive Culture:** Highly inclusive and diverse.
- **Neutral Culture:** Neutral or somewhat inclusive and diverse.
- **Non-Supportive Culture:** Somewhat exclusive and non-diverse or highly exclusive and non-diverse.

6.1.2. Effectiveness of DEI Initiatives: This will be categorized into two levels based on the responses:

- **Effective:** Strongly agree or agree that the organization's culture supports diversity and inclusion effectively.
- **Not Effective:** Neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree that the organization's culture supports diversity and inclusion effectively.

The collected data of 763 respondents through survey will be used to create a contingency table.

6.2. Observed Frequencies (Contingency Table)

Organizational Culture	Effective DEI Initiatives	Not Effective DEI Initiatives	Total
Supportive Culture	250	50	300
Neutral Culture	150	100	250
Non-Supportive Culture	50	163	213
Total	450	313	763

6.3. Expected Frequencies

The chi-square test will compare the observed frequencies in the table to the expected frequencies under the assumption that there is no association between organizational culture and the effectiveness of DEI initiatives (null hypothesis).

Cell	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	O - E	(O - E) ²	(O - E) ² / E
Supportive Culture & Effective DEI	250	176.93	73.07	5339.82	30.18
Supportive Culture & Not Effective DEI	50	123.07	-73.07	5339.82	43.39
Neutral Culture & Effective DEI	150	147.37	2.63	6.92	0.05
Neutral Culture & Not Effective DEI	100	102.63	-2.63	6.92	0.07
Non-Supportive Culture & Effective DEI	50	125.70	-75.70	5730.49	45.59
Non-Supportive Culture & Not Effective DEI	163	87.30	75.70	5730.49	65.64
Total					184.86

6.4. Chi-Square Calculation

Formula:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$$

6.5. Degrees of Freedom

$$Df = (3 - 1) \times (2 - 1) = 2$$

6.6. Critical Value and Decision

- **Significance Level:** $\alpha = 0.05$
- **Critical Value:** $\chi^2_{0.05,2} = 5.99$ (from chi-square table).

6.7. Decision

Since $\chi^2 = 184.86 > 5.99$, we **reject the null hypothesis**.

The results indicate that there is a significant association between organizational culture and the effectiveness of DEI initiatives. Specifically, organizations with a supportive culture are more likely to have effective DEI initiatives, while those with a non-supportive culture are less likely to have effective DEI initiatives.

7. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings from the chi-square analysis present strong evidence that organizational culture is an important factor in the success of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. The study, with a sample size of 763 participants, investigated the link between organizational culture – classified as supportive, neutral, or non-supportive – and the perceived success of DEI initiatives. The findings showed a significant relationship between these two variables, as indicated by a chi-square statistic of about 184.92 (degrees of freedom = 2, $p < 0.05$), which greatly surpasses the critical value of 5.99 at a 0.05 significance level. This confirms that the null hypothesis, which stated that organizational culture exerts no significant influence on the success of DEI initiatives, can be firmly rejected.

The evidence indicated that organizations with a supportive culture – defined as highly inclusive and diverse – were much more likely to have successful DEI initiatives. For example, in supportive cultures, 250 out of 300 respondents (83.3%) indicated that DEI initiatives were effective, while only 50 out of 213 respondents (23.5%) in non-supportive cultures did so. This extreme contrast highlights the need to create an inclusive organizational culture to maximize the success of DEI initiatives. On the other hand, organizations with a non-inclusive culture – characterized as somewhat or highly exclusive and non-diverse – were significantly less likely to have successful DEI initiatives, with most respondents in this group (163 out of 213, or 76.5%) indicating that DEI initiatives were not effective. Neutral cultures occupied the middle ground, with a more even spread of responses, indicating that not having active promotion of diversity and inclusion can nevertheless get in the way of effective DEI programs.

These results underscore the important role of organizational policies and leadership in influencing workplace culture and, by proxy, the success of DEI programs. Organizations with supportive cultures likely benefit from strong leadership commitment, clear mechanisms for reporting discrimination, and robust training programs that promote inclusivity. On the other hand, non-supportive cultures may suffer from a lack of accountability, inadequate policies, or insufficient efforts to address biases and discrimination. The research also indicates that enhancing organizational culture may result in more robust workplace relationships, improved team collaboration, and greater innovation, as workers in supportive cultures feel more at ease sharing diverse views and have equal opportunities for career development.

8. SUMMARY

This research investigates the role of organizational culture in ensuring the effectiveness of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategies within workplaces. With data collected from 763 respondents in Indian government and private organizations, the study utilizes a chi-square test to examine whether organizational culture, defined as supportive, neutral, or non-supportive, is associated with DEI effort success as reported. The results indicate a significant relationship, with a chi-square value of 184.92 ($p < 0.05$), and thus the null hypothesis is rejected. Organizations with a supportive culture were much more likely to have effective DEI programs in place, whereas organizations with a non-supportive culture struggled to create an inclusive environment. The research highlights the importance of leadership, policy compliance, and training in influencing workplace culture and promoting DEI goals. Through enhanced organizational commitment to

diversity, companies can promote increased employee engagement, teamwork, and innovation, and ultimately achieve a more just workplace.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire: Organizational Culture and DEI Initiatives

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. Age:

- ☐ 18-25
- ☐ 26-35
- ☐ 36-45
- ☐ 46-55
- ☐ 56+

2. Gender:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Non-binary/Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

3. Sector of Employment:

- ☐ Government
- ☐ Private

4. Industry:

- ☐ IT & Software
- ☐ Banking & Finance
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Manufacturing
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Retail & E-commerce
- ☐ Other (Please specify): _____

5. Years of Work Experience:

- ☐ 0-2 years
- ☐ 3-5 years

- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ 16+ years

Section 2: Organizational Culture

6. How would you describe the culture of your organization?

- ☐ Highly inclusive and diverse
- ☐ Somewhat inclusive and diverse
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat exclusive and non-diverse
- ☐ Highly exclusive and non-diverse

7. Does your organization have a formal DEI policy?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

8. How often does leadership promote diversity and inclusion initiatives?

- ☐ Very frequently
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

9. How comfortable do employees feel in expressing diverse opinions in your organization?

- ☐ Very comfortable
- ☐ Somewhat comfortable
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat uncomfortable
- ☐ Very uncomfortable

10. Are there clear mechanisms to report discrimination or bias in your organization?

- ☐ Yes, and they are effective



- ☐ Yes, but they are not effective
- ☐ No, there are no such mechanisms
- ☐ Not sure

Section 3: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives

11. Have you received any DEI training at your workplace?

- ☐ Yes, and it was effective
- ☐ Yes, but it was not effective
- ☐ No, I have never received DEI training
- ☐ Not sure

12. How diverse is the leadership in your organization?

- ☐ Very diverse
- ☐ Somewhat diverse
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Not diverse at all

13. Do you believe that hiring and promotions in your organization are based on merit, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or background?

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

14. Have you personally experienced or witnessed discrimination or bias in your workplace?

- ☐ Yes, frequently
- ☐ Yes, occasionally
- ☐ No, never

15. If you faced discrimination, was it addressed effectively by the organization?

- ☐ Yes

- ☐ No
- ☐ Not applicable

Section 4: Perceived Impact of Organizational Culture on DEI Initiatives

16. Do you think your organization's culture supports diversity and inclusion effectively?

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

17. In your opinion, how has your organization's DEI policy affected workplace relationships?

- ☐ Strengthened relationships
- ☐ Had no impact
- ☐ Created tensions
- ☐ Not sure

19. Have DEI initiatives in your workplace improved team collaboration and innovation?

- ☐ Yes, significantly
- ☐ Yes, somewhat
- ☐ No impact
- ☐ No, they have caused division

20. Do employees from diverse backgrounds have equal access to career growth opportunities in your organization?

- ☐ Yes, always
- ☐ Yes, but only in certain cases
- ☐ No, there are biases
- ☐ Not sure

21. What improvements would you suggest to strengthen DEI initiatives in your workplace?

- ☐ More leadership commitment



- ☐ Better training programs
- ☐ Stronger policies against discrimination
- ☐ Increased diversity in hiring
- ☐ Other (Please specify): _____