

EFFECT OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT ON EMPLOYEES' ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT: A STUDY OF INDIAN ORGANISATIONS

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Abstract *The main objective of the study is to assess the potential effect of diversity management on employees' commitment towards their organisation. Primary data based on a sample of 400 respondents from 162 Indian organisations have been analysed to test the stated hypothesis. Results of regression analysis revealed that implementing diversity management in the form of equality based HR practices i.e. recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, and compensation practices leads to increased organisational commitment among employees working in firms operating in India. The implications for HR practitioners, senior managers, and organisations are also discussed.*

Keywords: *Diversity Management, Employees' Organisational Commitment, India, Diversity*

INTRODUCTION

As an organisational asset, diversity has transformed from being a governmental or legal obligation to a strategic priority. A company whether global or not, is impacted by global diversity either directly or indirectly (Agarwal, 2012). Advocates of diversity claim that diverse workforce is economically beneficial (Ferley, Hartley, & Martin, 2003), aids in gaining competitive advantage (Richard & Miller, 2013), and eventually leads to better firm performance (Cox & Blake, 1991; Richard, 2000; Richard, Barnett, T., Dwyer, & Chadwick, 2004). Investing in organisational diversity is thus acknowledged by organisations worldwide (Kundu, 2004; Kundu, Mor, & Ranga, 2014). However, in the opinion of Farrer (2004), mere manifestation of diversity as a concept alone does not guarantee success; organisations need to manage diversity effectively by celebrating, valuing and actively encouraging the diversity of the workforce.

Several studies have claimed that diversity management aids in harvesting the true benefits from diversity (Choi & Rainey, 2010; Foldy, 2004; Thomas & Ely, 1996; Ely & Thomas, 2001). In light of the mounting evidence of the relationship between diversity management and firm performance (Armstrong, Flood, Guthrie, Liu, MacCurtain, & Mkamwa,

2010), researchers, HR managers, and businesses alike are increasingly showing interest in the subject. However, most of the research on diversity has been based in the U.S. and other Anglophone countries i.e. England, Canada, Australia (Peretz, Levi, & Fried, 2015) and may not be representing the situations of Asian countries, in which cultural values significantly differ (Magoshi & Chang, 2009). Moreover, Magoshi and Chang (2009) highlight that majority of the existing studies on diversity issues have focused on diversity among group members and its impact on team and organisational performance. Whereas, the impact of diversity management on employee attitudes and outcomes, has been widely ignored. The current research thus, aims to study the intended impact of diversity management practices on employees' organisational commitment, in the Indian context.

Studying organisational commitment, as employee outcome, is of specific interest to us because it entails employees to engage in behaviours that enhance their value and support the organisation (Zeinabadi, 2010). In other words, committed employees strongly believe in and accept the organisational goals and values and exert considerable effort in support of the organisation and to remain a member (Mowday, Steers, &

Porter, 1979; Angle & Perry, 1981). Moreover, as highlighted in other literature, the concept of organisational commitment is a more reliable way of measuring human behaviour in organised groups than other theoretical constructs such as job satisfaction or job involvement (Moon, 2000). Thus, the impact of diversity management on employees' organisational commitment will corroborate its utility as a key HR initiative to improve employee and organisational performance. Further, we selected India as a setting for this study because apart from being extremely diverse and multi-faceted in its history, culture and institutional frameworks (Thite, 2011), it has markedly different societal context for diversity from Western countries (Sowell, 2002; Budhwar, 2009). This makes diversity management an important HR issue in India and thus, offers a rich ground for studying diversity management; however, in spite of this the Indian context has not been considered by researchers (Cooke & Saini, 2010; Jauhari & Singh, 2013; Kundu, 2003). This study thus attempts to fill this research gap. In this paper, we first present our understanding of diversity management and organisational commitment concepts. Further, we discuss the rationale behind the hypothesised relationships. Finally, we test the hypothesized relationships using linear regression and present the findings and implications.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESES FORMULATION

Diversity Management

Diversity denotes the uniqueness that a person brings to the table, whether in ethnicity, country, language, class, sexual orientation, religion, age, thoughts, experiences, education, gender, or generation (Wang & McLean, 2015), and diversity management seeks to harness this uniqueness in the pursuit of more creative environments. Diversity management initiatives are specific activities, programmes, policies, and any other formal processes or efforts designed to promote organisational culture change related to diversity (Wentling & Nilda, 2000). The commonly espoused objectives of diversity management include valuing and utilizing workforce diversity and overcoming barriers like discrimination and segregation (Healy, Kirton, & Noon, 2010). Focus on diversity management has been linked to enhanced work related attitudes and behaviours: organisational loyalty (Jauhari & Singh, 2013), job satisfaction (Choi, 2009; Pitts, 2009), decreased intentions to quit/increased employee retention (Choi, 2009; McKay, Avery, Tonidandel, Morris, Hernandez, & Hebl, 2007) and business benefits: creativity and improved sales (Ozibilgin & Tatli, 2008), increased productivity (Armstrong *et al.*, 2010), and reduced costs linked to turnover and absenteeism (Armstrong *et al.*, 2010). Thus, organisations that invest

their resources and embrace diversity in taking advantage of the opportunities diversity offers outperform those that fail to make such investments (Choi & Rainey, 2009; Kochan, Bezrukova, Ely, Jackson, Joshi, Jehn, Leonard, Levine, & Thomas, 2003).

Organisational Commitment

An employees' commitment towards organisation is generally defined as 'the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organisation' (Mowday *et al.*, p. 27). A number of studies have revealed organisational commitment as a very important factor to be measured, since it is able to predict turnover (Buttner, Lowe, & Billings-Harris, 2012), employees' loyalty (Steinhaus & Perry, 1996), as well as the employees' performance (Larson & Fukami, 1984). Through a survey of 1244 respondents in U.S., Angle and Perry (1981) have highlighted that employees' commitment to their work organisations have a positive impact on organisational effectiveness measured in terms of reduced employee turnover. In other words, employees' commitment has an impact on their intention to stay with the organisation. In a study of life insurance sales people, Leong, Randall, & Cote (2006) have highlighted that employees' organisational commitment contributes positively to their job performance.

Diversity Management and Organisational Commitment

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) offers an explanatory framework to explain how diversity management practices are linked to organisational commitment. The basic principle behind social exchange theory is the norm of reciprocity. Referring to Blau (1964), when employees receive economic or socio-emotional benefits from their organisations in the form of various HR initiatives, they feel obligated to respond in ways beneficial for organisations. Ostroff and Bowen (2000), using a social exchange lens, highlighted that HR practices act as critical determinants in eliciting employees to behave in ways supportive of organisational goals. In the same manner, Gong, Chang, and Cheung (2010) opine that an organisation's HR practices are mostly seen as 'personalised commitment' by the employees, which necessitates them to respond with positive attitudes and behaviour. Researchers have long maintained that HR practices founded on commitment philosophy have positive effects on employees' attitudes (Arthur, 1994; Delaney & Huselid, 1996; Pfeffer, 1998). According to Magoshi and Chang (2009), diversity management may be regarded as a reflection of organisation's commitment philosophy as it primarily implies organisation's commitment to diverse workforce and their diverse needs. Therefore, similar to other

commitment based HR practices diversity management practices may trigger similar effects on employee attitudes. Based on this, through a comparative study of Japan and Korea employing 582 respondents, Magoshi and Chang (2009) confirmed that effective implementation of diversity management triggers the employees' organisational commitment. Analogously, Moshabaki, Madani, & Ghorbani (2013) highlighted that HR focussed diversity management practices are positively related to employees' organisational commitment and their perceptions of procedural justice. Hence, following hypothesis is advanced on the basis of above literature:

Hypothesis 1: Diversity management is positively related to employees' organisational commitment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample

In order to gather the data, questionnaire survey method was adopted. Primary data based on 400 respondents from 162 organisations were analysed for testing the stated hypotheses. The sample consisted of 35.8% Indian companies and 64.2% MNCs; respondents sampled in Indian companies were 36.0% and in MNCs were 64.0%. Out of the total sample, 87.8% were males and 12.3% were female respondents. Average age of the respondent employees was 36.74 years whereas average experience of the respondents was 12.83 years.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Variables	Categories	Number	Percentage	Average
1. Age	Employees			36.74
2. Gender	Male	351	87.75	
	Female	49	12.25	
	Total	400		
3. Experience	Employees			12.83

Measures

Diversity management (independent variable): Diversity management practices were measured by using a four-item scale. The items were adopted from the study of Shen, D'Netto and Tang (2010) with some modifications. Only four items were used in the study. Pertaining to the fact that diversity management in India is at an elementary or non-existent stage (Woodard & Saini, 2006) and majorly implies equal employment practices, only items representing diversity practices related to equal opportunity were selected. The measurement items included: 1. 'Recruitment and selection related practices provide equal opportunities to applicants regardless of personal characteristics and backgrounds, such as caste, ethnic origin, gender and religion'. 2. 'Training opportunities are provided to all employees regardless of personal characteristics and backgrounds, such as caste, ethnic origin, gender and religion'. 3. 'Appraisal is related to performance rather than personal characteristics and backgrounds, such as caste, ethnic origin, gender and religion'. 4. 'Employee compensation is based on performance and ability rather than personal characteristics and backgrounds, such as caste, ethnic origin, gender and religion'. Responses were taken on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). When subjected to principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation, one factor emerged with Eigen value of 2.108 explaining 52.68% of the variance. Cronbach α for this scale was 0.675 (see Table 2).

Employees' organisational commitment (dependent variable): Employees' organisational commitment was measured by using the six item scale adapted from Mowday *et al.* (1979) study. A sample item of this scale is: "I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this organisation be successful. Responses were taken on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Further, when these six statements were subjected to principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation, one factor emerged with eigen value of 3.550 explaining 59.17% of the variance. The items related to this variable can be seen through Table 3. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.850.

Table 2: Factor Analysis Related to Diversity Management

Variables	Loadings	Eigen value	Percent of variance	Cronbach alpha
Diversity management		2.108	52.688	0.675
Recruitment and selection related diversity management	0.810			
Training and development related diversity management	0.785			
Performance appraisal related diversity management	0.765			
Compensation practice related diversity management	0.501			
Total scale (4 items)				

Table 3: Factor Analysis Related to Organisational Commitment

Variables	Loadings	Eigen value	Percent of variance	Cronbach alpha
Organisational commitment		3.550	59.175	0.850
I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected	0.646			
I talk up this organisation to my friends as a great organisation to work for.	0.833			
I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this organisation.	0.815			
I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organisation.	0.623			
I am extremely glad that I chose this organisation to work for over others	0.845			
For me, this is the best of all organisations for which to work.	0.797			
Total scale (6 items)				

Control Variables

Three variables were chosen for exerting controls in our study and that included gender, age of the employees, and experience of the employees. Age was classified into six categories: under 25 years, 26-30 years, 31-40 years, 41-50 years, 51-60 years, and above 60 years. Gender was categorised as male and female.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations are reported in Table 4. The correlations among independent and dependent variables were found to support the hypothesized linkage between diversity management and employees' organisational commitment. In order to check out the possibility of multi collinearity among predictor variables, the collinearity diagnosis was computed. The calculated average VIF was 1.04, not substantially greater than 1 and therefore, regression was not biased (Bowerman & O'Connell, 1990). The lowest tolerance value was found to be 0.72, far greater than 'cause of concern value' of 0.40 (Allison, 1999). Therefore, there was no need to be concern

for multicollinearity problem in the specified equations.

Regression Analysis

To test the stated hypotheses, regression analysis was adopted in this study. The regression model in both the steps was found significant according to F statistics (see Table V). In step 1, only control variables were included in the regression equation. Coefficients of age, gender and experience of employees did not show significant effect on employees' satisfaction. Further, in step 2, when the predictor variable was introduced in the regression equation, the coefficient of the predictor variable i.e. diversity management was found positive and significant for employees' organisational commitment ($\beta = 0.358$, $p \leq 0.001$). Accordingly, the results supported the proposed hypotheses.

DISCUSSION

Based on a sample of 400 respondents, the findings have indicated that implementation of diversity management focused HRM in the form of recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, and compensation practices can help in enhancing employees' organisational commitment in organisations operating

Table 4: Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations

Variables	No. of Items	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Age	-	36.73	8.24	-				
2. Gender	-	1.12	0.33	-0.153**	-			
3. Experience	-	12.83	8.49	0.868**	-0.138**	-		
4. Diversity management	4	4.16	0.69	0.010	0.016	-0.002	-	
5. Organisational commitment	6	3.88	0.71	0.53	-0.013	-0.006	0.050	0.358***

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 5: Results of Regression Analysis Showing Effect of Diversity Management on Organisational Commitment

Independent variables	Dependent variable		
	Organisational commitment		
	Step 1		Step 2
Constant	3.755***		2.284***
Employees' age	0.037		0.019
Employees' gender	-0.005		-0.012
Employees' total experience	0.017		0.033
Diversity management	-		0.358***
R ²	0.003		0.131
Adjusted R ²	0.005		0.122
R ² Change	0.003		0.131
F Statistic	0.388		14.903***
N	400		400

Notes: *** $p \leq .001$, ** $p \leq .01$, * $p \leq .05$

in India. This supports the basic notion regarding social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) that investments in HR practices or systems by organisations helps in attaining positive employee attitude and behaviours. A number of other studies have highlighted similar findings. For instance, Kossek and Block (2000) asserted that an organisation adopting a commitment based HR initiative fosters employees' commitment towards the organisation. Similarly, through a sample of 10,976 Dutch public sector employees, Ashikali and Groeneveld (2015) revealed that diversity management positively triggers employees' organisational commitment. In yet another survey, Magoshi and Chang (2009) verified the relationship between diversity management practices and employees' organisational commitment. The findings have also highlighted that age, gender, and employees' experience are not significantly related to employees' organisational commitment. However, Magoshi and Chang (2009) showed their positive association with the organisational commitment.

The present study has some notable implications for HR practitioners/diversity specialists, senior managers, and organisations in Indian as well as global context. From a practical point of view, the study recommends that HR managers/diversity managers are required to devise and implement diversity management focussed HR practices very cautiously, as these initiatives are reported to have substantial effects on employees' attitudes and behaviours. The current study gives a strong indication that adoption of diversity management will empower firms to value and make use of diversity effectively by enhancing employees' commitment towards their organisation, thus organisations need to place significant emphasis on communicating the intent of

these initiatives in order to ensure the positive receptivity by employees. Further, as asserted by researchers, top management's support is the key determinant for shaping and implementing diversity management initiatives (Guillame *et al.*, 2014); senior managers need to develop commitment to ensure that organisation executes equality based diversity management processes or initiatives. Advocating an inside-out approach, if firms adopt initiatives that point to the employees that their organisation is committed to diversity, they will be able to yield a committed workforce.

This study possesses some limitations and therefore, offers directions for future researchers. The measurement of employee outcome was limited to organisational commitment only; future studies must cover other important variables such as job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour and trust. Further, the studies must investigate the impact of diversity management on firm performance. In addition, it is suggested that similar studies must be carried out in other cultural contexts to get more concrete and generalised results.

CONCLUSIONS

The regression model presented in this study progress our understanding of how diversity management in organisations can affect employee outcomes. The results point out that adoption of diversity management focused HRM in the form of equal opportunity based recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, and compensation practices can help in enhancing employees' organisational commitment in organisations operating in India.

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