



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### TRIAD OF WORKFORCE DIVERSITY, INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

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#### ABSTRACT

This article aims to make a significant input to the current research works on workforce diversity, Interpersonal relationships and employee performance. Additionally it will purpose model to test the triadic relation on apropos variables. Workforce diversity plays a crucial role in the success of organizations and has become a competitive necessity in recent years. Mixture of personal variables i.e. age, educational background, experience etc. towards the job are critical variables that can impact employee performance. An inclusive workplace brings different age, culture, experiences, backgrounds etc. together to achieve organizational goals. Managing workforce diversity effectively can lead to more effective organizations to respond to contemporary business prospects more quickly and innovatively. Diversity affects interpersonal communication, conflict resolution, belief and group synergy. Likewise, interpersonal relations significantly affect employee performance and organizational performance. Hence, it can be postulated a triadic relationship among workforce diversity, interpersonal relations and employee's performance.

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## INTRODUCTION

The business world is undergoing a major transference route for globalization, with barriers to trade and investments diminishing and distances shrinking due to advancements in technology. In this globalized world, business needs to employ an operative and proficient workforce to survive in a competitive environment. Diversity incorporates beliefs, gender, race, sexual orientation, personal history, age, and socioeconomic position. Joshi and Jackson, (2008) argued that diversity in teams can lead to cooperative behaviors between teams in organizations, benefiting both the teams and individual members. Organizations with diverse workforces must adhere to legitimate and moral values associated to discrimination, harassment, and parity. Employees are often more aware of their rights and the importance of holding organizations accountable for maintaining a fair and inclusive workplace.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Early researches in this field provide a sound base to understand the concepts under present research problem.

**Workforce diversity:** According to Ferguson and Johnston (1995), diverse describes a typical firm's employees, independent contractors, and customers. Frequent interaction and exposure to diverse backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives can lead to greater understanding and acceptance among employees. It can broaden one's horizons and help individuals appreciate the worth of diversity. Saxena, (2014) stated that workforce diversity brings together individuals with different perspectives, backgrounds, and abilities, which can lead to innovative ideas and problem-solving. Managing a diversified workforce is a test for organizations, but it is essential for achieving common objectives. Cordial interpersonal relationships among employees play an important role in the smooth functioning of an organization. Nair and Vohra, (2015) creating an inclusive culture goes beyond diversity-based recruitment and training and includes holistic ways to leverage diversity. Employing a diversified workforce is essential for organizations to compete in the marketplace. Workforce diversity becomes a primary concern to sustain due to the evolving nature of organizations into multifaceted and active forms, with a focus on team-based organizational structures. Goswami & Goswami, (2018) highlighted the importance of inclusive workplaces and employee engagement, providing practical interventions for human resource development professionals to promote workplace inclusion and employee engagement.

A well trained and organised workforce plays a pivotal role to obtain the organizational goals. Enhanced organizational performance can be achieved by leveraging diversity intelligence and understanding the value of all employees (Hughes, 2019). Christine, (2020) stated a significant and positive influence of workforce diversity in gender, age, education, and ethnicity on employee performance. Okundia, (2021) to reap the long-term rewards of diversity, organizations need to address underlying causes of problems and create an empowering culture through training programs and clarifying job requirements. It is vital for modern businesses to acclimate to change and manage diversity to maximize its benefits for current and prospective employees. Oluwatoyin, (2022) emphasized the need for effective human resource management practices (HRMPs) to reap the benefits of increasing workforce diversity. A diverse workforce significantly contributes to employee performance. Malik, (2022) outlined the significant relation between employee satisfaction and retention. The more organization values the employee the more they contribute. Oluwatoyin, (2022) said that organizations adopt workforce diversity policies and initiatives due to the inevitability of diversity and legal requirements for employment opportunities and affirmative action. Rao,et.al.,(2023) stated a positive relation between workplace diversity and employee engagement, as well as an association between employee engagement and leader trust. Based on the above discussion workforce diversity has been shown in Figure 1.

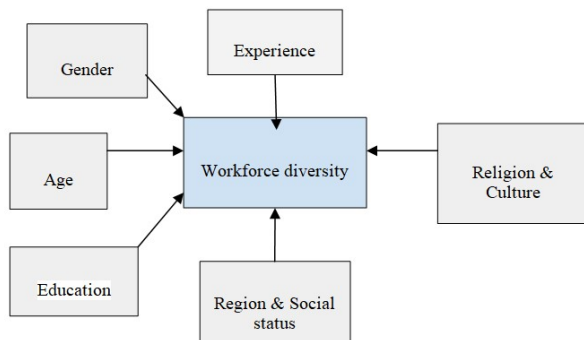


Figure 1. Dimensions of workforce diversity

**Interpersonal Relationship:** Interpersonal variables expand the horizon of exchange of knowledge in the organization for competitive advantage. The social acceptability at workplace and the shared experiences enhances the level of satisfaction and happiness at the workplace. Interpersonal relations play a vital role in every organization and at all levels of human endeavor, contributing to productivity and fostering harmony in the workplace. Organizations strive to improve their efficiency and productivity by attracting, retaining, developing, motivating, and communicating with their employees. Jehn & Shah, (1997) mentioned friendship groups outperformed acquaintance groups on both decision-making and motor tasks due to a greater degree of group commitment and cooperation. Positive communication mediated the relationship amid bond and motor task performance. Examining the reconciling courses escalate the group performance. Okoro and Washington, (2012) highlighted the role of communication in interpersonal cultural diverse organization. Nieto, (2014) suggested building positive relationships with employees, fostering open communication, and promoting a culture of trust and collaboration improves interpersonal relations.

Interpersonal relations encompass openness, effective communication, respect, togetherness, support and empathy. To work effectively in diverse teams, individuals often need to improve their communication skills i.e. active listening, empathy, easy adaptability of different communication styles, cultural norms and preferences. Organizational efforts to accommodate communication norms can signal a specific positive diversity climate and contribute to greater success in local attraction and retention efforts (Gobi et al, 2015). Nair and Vohra, (2015) when employees feel included, they are able to bring their whole selves to the organization, enabling effective problem-solving, creativity, innovation, and enhanced performance. Performance of employees depends on various factors such as job satisfaction, compensation, motivation, conducive working environment, and training. Trustworthy co-workers who appreciate and motivate each other are essential for a quality work environment (Velmurugan, 2016). Bodika and Aigbavboa, (2018) good interpersonal relations within the construction industry can lead to better employee relations, an encouraging work environment, and a reduction in project delays. Cordial interpersonal relationships among employees play a significant role in the smooth functioning of an organization. Brhane and Zewdie, (2018) Leadership style, communication, shared goals, trust, and conflict management are important components of interpersonal relationship management that impact employee performance. Kaori, et.al.(2019) interpersonal skills are increasingly important in the era of Information & Technology, coaching can improve required interpersonal skills. Phillip et.al, (2022) stated that interpersonal relationship skills such as conflict management, communication, positive attitude, leadership, and teamwork significantly improve organizational performance. Good relations between employees lead to enhanced teamwork and higher employee involvement. Improved staff communication leads to improved performance outcomes (Hasan & Patak, 2023). Court, (2023) interpersonal relations positively influence employee performance at individual level as well as team level. Figure 2 shows the different determinants of interpersonal relations based on the cited literature.

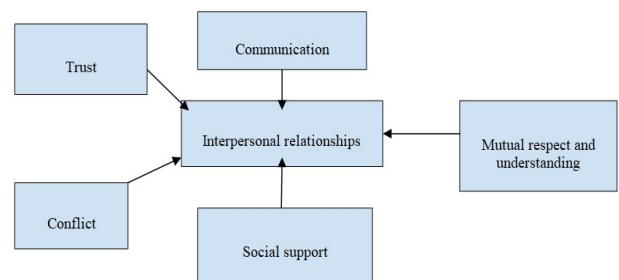


Figure 2. Determinants of Interpersonal relationships

**Employee Performance:** Performance is an important aspect of internal marketing and organizational development. Employee performance is crucial for organizational productivity and achieving goals. Employees need to set their own goals in addition to meeting managers' expectations. High-performing employees contribute to the organization's success and positive image. Personal motivation, working environment, benefits and rewards, promotion opportunities, clarity of tasks, communication quality and frequency, and the relationship with customers is some determinants of employee performance (Vosloban, 2012).

Dahkoul, (2018) stated employee satisfaction, management standards, and training are significant factors for employee performance, with employee satisfaction being the most significant among the three. Veri, et al., (2018) found that leadership style directly does not improve employee performance, but indirectly it can improve employee performance when mediated by good work motivation. Hermina and Yosepha, (2019) revealed that leadership style, motivation, and work discipline collectively influenced employee performance. Work discipline had the highest effect on employee performance. Sari, (2020) identified work motivation as a positive and significant factor affecting performance. Islam, et al. (2022) stated four dominant factors that affect employee performance are employee engagement, training and development, job satisfaction, and compensation and rewards.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:** Workforce diversity effects on interpersonal relationships and employee performance are multifaceted. While diversity can lead to greater understanding, creativity, and inclusive relationships, it can also present challenges related to communication, bias, and conflict resolution. Effective diversity and inclusion initiatives and training can help organizations to improve interpersonal relations and employee performance.

Several researches have been conducted (Hughes, 2019; Christine, 2020; Oluwatoyin, 2022; Malik, 2022; Hasan & Patak, 2023; Court, 2023) either on workforce diversity impact on interpersonal relations; interpersonal relations impact on employee performance or workforce diversity impact on employees' performance. But less research has been directed to explore the triadic relation of the three; Workforce diversity; interpersonal relationships and employee performance. Therefore, the present study has been focused to explore, understanding describe the triadic relationship between workforce diversity, interpersonal relations and employee performance.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To describe the impact of workforce diversity on employee performance;
- To state the impact of workforce diversity on interpersonal relations;
- To define the relationship between Interpersonal relations and employee performance;
- To label the Interpersonal relations status between workforce diversity and employee performance.

## HYPOTHESIS

**H1:** Workforce diversity significantly affects Employee performance;

**H2:** Workforce diversity significantly affects Interpersonal relations;

**H3:** Interpersonal relations have a direct relationship with employee performance;

**H4:** Interpersonal relations are moderators between workforce diversity and employee performance.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is integrative and descriptive in terms of theoretical framework. Main objective of the research is to propose a model of the triadic relationship of Workforce Diversity, Interpersonal Relationships and Employee Performance. For this purpose related articles have been considered, retrieved from Semantic scholar and Google scholar from the period 2000 to 2023. Recent supporting evidence also has been considered to synthesize the problem statement of the study.

## DISCUSSION

Analysis has been performed in three variants. First, the relationship between workforce diversity and employee performance has been traced and described. Second, identified the relation between workforce diversity and interpersonal relations; third relationship between interpersonal relation and employee performance established based on review; finally interpersonal relations setup as a moderator between workforce diversity and employee performance.

**H1: Workforce Diversity and Employee Performance:** Ahmad and Alkhwilani (2017) investigated the impact of workforce diversity on employee performance, and found a statistically significant effect of gender, ethnicity, and education on employee performance. Jayawardana and Priyashantha (2019) provided strong evidence to support the impact of these diversity factors on employee performance. Workforce diversity, including age diversity, educational diversity, religious diversity, work experience diversity, and attitude diversity, has a significant and positive impact on employee performance in the apparel industry in Sri Lanka. Sohail et al. (2019) found a positive relationship between demographic variables (age, gender, education background, and ethnic diversity) and employee performance in the higher education sector. Gender diversity, specifically, was highlighted as an important factor in improving employee performance when equal opportunities were provided to both males and females.

Christine, C. (2020) found significant and positive influence of workforce diversity on employee performance. It concludes that diversity in gender, age, education, and ethnicity improves employee performance. Okundia (2021) highlighted the advantages of workforce diversity in modern organizations such as supporting growth, increasing employee expertise and creativity, and enhancing corporate image. However, embracing diversity also presents challenges, including prejudice, stereotyping, and difficulties in attracting and motivating employees. Malik (2022) utilized a quantitative research approach, specifically employing a survey method to collect data from 120 employees working in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Pakistan. The study found a significant positive correlation between workforce diversity's dimensions such as gender, age, education, and ethnicity and employee performance in Pakistani SMEs. Further, training for workforce diversity was identified as an important factor in improving employee performance and solving work-related problems in SMEs.

Oluwatoyin, I. (2022) examined the influence of workforce diversity on organizational performance and the moderating effects of human resource management practices (HRMPs) in this relationship. The results showed the insignificant influence

of workforce diversity dimensions on organizational performance. However, the addition of HRMPs to the model, showed a significant increase in organizational performance. Rao, et al., (2023) utilized a structured questionnaire to collect data from individuals working for multinational companies in India's Public Capital Region and employed Regression models to determine the factors influencing employee engagement and workplace diversity. The analysis showed that workplace diversity does not lead to a decline in employee performance, as most respondents disagreed with this claim. The research underlined the significance of collecting diverse data in the field of workplace diversity and employee engagement. Ngalo, Ogohi and Ibrahim (2023) concluded that workplace diversity variables like gender diversity, income diversity, ethnic diversity, and belief diversity have a significant impact on employee effectiveness and performance. The study emphasizes the importance of organizations being conscious of demographic characteristics and leveraging diversity to gain a economical benefit and stay competitive. Habib and Zaidi (2023) found a significant relationship between workforce diversity and employee performance in the banking sector of Karachi, Pakistan. Organizational culture partially mediates the relationship between workforce diversity and employee performance.



**Figure 3. Impact of workforce diversity on employee performance**

**H2: Workforce Diversity and Interpersonal Relations:** Ely and Thomas (2001) explored the impact of diversity on work group practices and results. The authors identified three different perspectives i.e. integration and learning; access and legitimacy; and discrimination and fairness on workforce diversity that people embrace. The study highlighted cultural-identity-group membership's contribution to develop interpersonal relationships on the work. Peltokorpi, (2006) emphasized the complex relationship between diversity and interpersonal communication, with some attributes i.e. gender, racio-ethnicity, and work values having a negative impact while tenure diversity had a positive impact by employing Regression analysis. The results suggest that the impact of diversity on communication may extend beyond readily detected attributes.

Joshi and Jackson (2008) concluded that diversity in organizations has a significant impact on teamwork and cooperation between teams. It also provides a framework to understand the role of demographic structure in shaping the relationships between and within teams. It emphasized that the diversity in a team is the key of effective management of interpersonal relationships in the organization. Nieto (2014) emphasized the need for organizations to adapt their employee relations strategies to accommodate the diverse needs and expectations of the modern workforce. The paper concludes that by prioritizing employee relations and adapting to the changing workforce, organizations can enhance employee satisfaction, productivity, and overall organizational performance. Gobi et al. (2015) identified the essentials of an organizational communication to facilitate a positive diversity climate. The study utilized a qualitative research approach, specifically eliciting narratives from 458 Emirati respondents

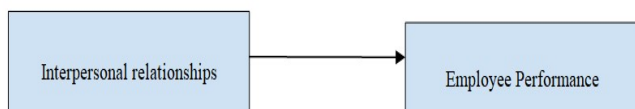
to gather data on positive and negative workplace communication experiences. It found that nurturing familiar and culturally acceptable communication strategies to Emirati citizens is crucial for their meaningful and easeful operation within a workforce dominated by expatriates. Goswami and Goswami, (2018) analyzed the relation between workplace inclusion and employee engagement and the impact of workplace diversity, managerial support, and trust in the leader on workplace inclusion. The findings indicate a significant positive correlation between workforce diversity and workplace inclusion. Further the positive and significant effects of managerial support and trust on the leader on workplace inclusion. Hughes, (2019) emphasized the importance of workforce inter-personnel diversity as a component of talent management and highlighted the need for organizational leaders, HRM, and HRD professionals to view talent management from the perspective of workforce inter-personnel diversity. It suggested that managing workforce inter-personnel diversity requires training and developing employees, providing career pathways, and valuing employees' time.



**Figure 4. Workforce diversity impact on interpersonal relationships**

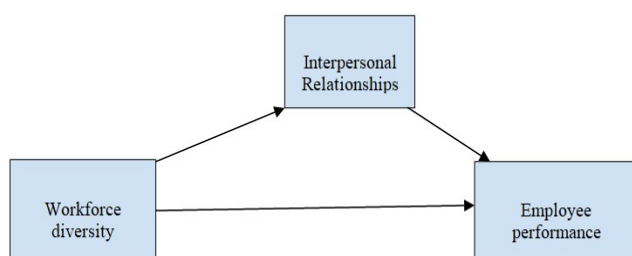
**H3: Interpersonal relations and Employee Performance:** Sadri and Tran (2002) proposed managing personal growth and mentoring helps to develop better supervisor-subordinate communication. The effectiveness of strategies can be tested using job satisfaction, absenteeism, productivity, and turnover parameters. Carter, L., Murray, P., & Gray, D. (2011) emphasizes the importance of interpersonal variables in knowledge advancement in the organization which contribute to better people's performance at work. It proposed a developmental model to test the relationships between IRC and employee performance in subsequent research. Bodika and Aigbavboa (2018) employed an exploratory approach, using a desktop study and reviewing published and unpublished papers to explore the interpersonal relationship among employees within construction sites. Interpersonal relationships among construction employees have a significant impact on individual performance and overall project progress, as well as fostering cordiality, enriching communication, and reducing interpersonal clashes. Ghofar, A., Luddin, M. R. & Akbar, M. (2018) used correlational research design in the study, and found a positive direct effect of interpersonal communication on employee organizational commitment and self-engagement. It recommends practicing open communication, empathy, support, positive thinking, and equality to improve interpersonal communication. Brhane and Zewdie (2018) described components of employee relationship management, such as communication, participative leadership, shared goals and values, mutual trust, motivation, and conflict management, which significantly affect employee performance. They emphasised that employee relationship management helps build strong relationships with employees, reinforcing commitment and enhancing employee performance, which ultimately boosts organizational effectiveness. Saraih et al. (2019) found a high level of job performance among employees in the manufacturing company in Malaysia and

provided evidence of the positive relationships between interpersonal communication and job performance, additionally between job performance and task design. Further, suggested that increased interpersonal communication and perceived good task design lead to improved job performance. Ahamad and Rahman (2019) found a positive impact of interpersonal relation conflict and perceived social distance in public sector banks. Further employees prefer to work with the same social group to avoid conflict and distress. Ayofe and Martha (2022) investigated the connection between interpersonal relationships and employee performance in selected Nigeria banks. The study found that effective communication, team building, and social support were rated highly by the respondents. High-quality interpersonal relationships improve work performance, while destructive relationships created friction and unhealthy rivalry, dampening employee performance. Phillip et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of interpersonal relationships in achieving organizational goals and objectives. Generally the performance of an organization is dependent on the commitment and involvement of individuals within the organization. Interpersonal relationship skills contribute to improved performance at the individual level, including successful completion of tasks, quality of work, problem-solving skills, and creativity. Interpersonal relationships and communication are important mechanisms for gauging, evaluating, and measuring the effectiveness, efficiency, and quality of services rendered by organizations. Hasan and Patak, (2023) conducted a semi-structured interview conducted with the selected participants and utilized thematic analysis to analyze the research data. The study found a significant impact of Interpersonal communication on employee performance.



**H4: The triad of workforce diversity, Interpersonal relations and Employee performance:** Employees are valuable assets for organizations and their performance is crucial for achieving organizational goals. Interpersonal relationship management plays a crucial role to attain organizational goals, productivity, motivation, and high performance. Nair and Vohra (2015) emphasized on creating a culture of inclusion in the workplace, where all social groups have the equal opportunity to be present, to be heard, and engaged in core activities of the organization. It suggested that diversity and inclusion practices should be treated as a change in culture. Based on the H1, H2 and H3 following model has been proposed for the triadic relationship.

#### Proposed Model



**Figure 6. triad of workforce diversity, Interpersonal relations and Employee performance**

## CONCLUSION

Management of diversity is a young science. Diversity management is important for organizations to enhance the efficiency and productivity of workers. The reviewed articles examined the impact of workforce diversity on interpersonal relationships; impact of interpersonal relations on employee performance; and impact of workforce diversity on employee performance. From the review it concludes that the impact of workforce diversity on employee performance can have both negative and positive effects, depending on how well it is managed. Corporate administrators need to recognize the beneficial link between diversity; interpersonal relations and worker efficacy. Further, it also concludes that good interpersonal relations have a positive impact on employee performance and contribute to the overall success of the organization. Interpersonal relations comprise communication, trust, mutual understanding etc. Management considerably looks for developing healthy relations among employees to improve performance. Therefore, based on prior studies and to fill the research gap the present study proposes a triadic relationship among workforce diversity, interpersonal relations and employee performance. The proposed model (figure 6) can be further investigated and examined through empirical data and research.

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