

The Impact of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion on Workplace Well-being: Evidence from a Courier Services Company

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Abstract

Background: Organizations increasingly recognize diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) as strategic imperatives for fostering workplace well-being, yet empirical evidence on this relationship remains limited.

Objective: This study examines the relationship between DEI initiatives and workplace well-being among employees in the courier services sector.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey was conducted with 116 employees from private sector, using validated instruments for DEI climate and workplace well-being. Data analysis employed correlation, regression, ANOVA, and t-tests using SPSS.

Results: Strong positive correlation was found between DEI and workplace well-being ($r = 0.845$, $p < 0.001$). Regression analysis revealed that DEI explains 71.5% of variance in workplace well-being ($R^2 = 0.715$, $F = 285.576$, $p < 0.001$). Significant age-related differences were observed ($F = 4.443$, $p = 0.005$), while no gender differences were detected ($p = 0.729$).

Conclusions: DEI initiatives significantly enhance workplace well-being, with age being a moderating factor. Organizations should implement comprehensive DEI strategies to improve employee well-being outcomes.

Keywords: diversity, equity, inclusion, workplace well-being, employee satisfaction, organizational behavior

1. Introduction

The contemporary workplace has witnessed unprecedented attention to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) as organizations strive to create environments that promote both social justice and business performance (Hamidullah et al., 2024). While substantial investments in DEI initiatives continue globally, understanding their direct impact on workplace well-being remains insufficiently explored. This gap is particularly relevant in emerging economies where workforce diversity is expanding rapidly.

Workplace well-being encompasses employees' physical health, mental health, and job satisfaction (Danna & Griffin, 1999), serving as a critical determinant of organizational success. Theoretical frameworks suggest that inclusive environments foster psychological safety, belongingness, and equitable access to opportunities, thereby enhancing overall well-being (Shore et al., 2011). However, empirical evidence linking DEI practices to well-being outcomes in specific industry contexts remains limited.

The courier services sector, characterized by diverse workforce compositions and varying organizational hierarchies, presents an ideal context for examining DEI-wellbeing relationships. This industry faces unique challenges including high employee turnover, varying socioeconomic backgrounds, and evolving customer demands, making workplace well-being initiatives particularly crucial.

This study addresses the research gap by investigating the relationship between DEI initiatives and workplace well-being in a courier services company in Chennai, India. The research contributes to organizational behavior literature by providing empirical evidence from an understudied industry context and offers practical insights for developing effective workplace interventions.

2. Literature Review

Recent literature highlights the growing recognition of DEI as both ethical imperatives and strategic necessities for organizational success. Holt (2024) emphasizes that innovation and productivity thrive in diverse workplaces, with effective DEI training frameworks fostering belonging and sustainable change. Similarly, Comello et al. (2024) advocate viewing DEI workplace programs as critical health issues, noting that inequitable environments contribute to negative health outcomes.

The relationship between inclusion and well-being is theoretically grounded in Social Exchange Theory and Organizational Justice frameworks. Shore et al. (2011) conceptualize inclusion as the degree individuals feel part of critical organizational processes, emphasizing belongingness and uniqueness. When employees perceive fairness in treatment and opportunities, they experience enhanced psychological safety and job satisfaction (Enders, 2021).

Workplace well-being research has evolved from focusing solely on hedonic aspects to incorporating eudaimonic dimensions. Bartels et al. (2019) developed the Eudaimonic Workplace Well-being Scale, demonstrating that comprehensive well-being models better explain organizational outcomes. Singh et al. (2019) found that psychological variables, particularly self-efficacy, significantly influence workplace well-being, with stronger effects among individuals engaged in sustainability practices.

Industry-specific research remains limited, particularly in service sectors like courier services. The unique characteristics of such industries—including diverse workforce demographics, varying skill levels, and customer-facing roles—may influence how DEI initiatives impact well-being outcomes differently than in other contexts.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Participants

This cross-sectional study employed a descriptive research design using structured questionnaires. The sample comprised 116 employees from private sector, selected through convenience sampling. Participants included employees from various hierarchical levels: lower level ($n = 105$), middle level ($n = 10$), and top level ($n = 1$).

Demographic characteristics revealed a predominantly young workforce (21-30 years: $n = 50$; 31-40 years: $n = 40$), with female majority ($n = 93$, 80.2%). Most participants were graduates ($n = 69$) earning below ₹30,000 monthly ($n = 105$), with 1-5 years organizational experience ($n = 54$).

3.2 Instruments

DEI Climate: A 17-item scale adapted from the University of Michigan Campus Climate Survey on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion was used (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.938$).

Workplace Well-being: A 7-item scale developed by Pradhan and Hati for measuring employee well-being was employed (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.871$).

Both instruments demonstrated excellent internal consistency reliability.

3.3 Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS, employing frequency analysis, reliability testing, Pearson correlation, linear regression, one-way ANOVA, and independent samples t-tests. Significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

The study obtained organizational permission and ensured participant anonymity. Participation was voluntary with informed consent.

4. Results

4.1 Correlation Analysis

Strong positive correlation was observed between DEI and workplace well-being ($r = 0.845$, $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis 1. This indicates that higher perceived DEI climate significantly associates with enhanced workplace well-being.

4.2 Regression Analysis

Linear regression analysis revealed that DEI significantly predicts workplace well-being ($F = 285.576$, $p < 0.001$). The model explains 71.5% of variance in workplace well-being ($R^2 = 0.715$), with DEI as a strong predictor ($\beta = 0.845$, $p < 0.001$). The regression equation: Workplace Well-being = $2.616 + 0.375(\text{DEI})$.

4.3 Age Group Differences

One-way ANOVA revealed significant differences among age groups in workplace well-being ($F = 4.443$, $p = 0.005$), supporting Hypothesis 2. Post-hoc analysis would be needed to determine specific group differences.

4.4 Gender Differences

Independent samples t-test showed no significant gender differences in workplace well-being ($t = -0.418$, $p = 0.677$), rejecting Hypothesis 3. Male ($M = 28.78$, $SD = 4.74$) and female ($M = 29.15$, $SD = 3.51$) employees reported similar well-being levels.

5. Discussion

This study provides robust empirical evidence for the significant relationship between DEI initiatives and workplace well-being in the courier services sector. The strong correlation ($r = 0.845$) and substantial variance explanation (71.5%) demonstrate that DEI climate substantially influences employee well-being outcomes.

The findings align with theoretical predictions from Social Exchange Theory and Organizational Justice frameworks. When employees perceive their workplace as diverse, equitable, and inclusive, they experience enhanced psychological safety, belongingness, and fairness, translating into improved well-being outcomes.

The age-related differences in well-being responses suggest that DEI initiatives may resonate differently across generational cohorts. Younger employees, who constitute the majority in this sample, may have different expectations and responses to inclusion efforts compared to older employees. This finding supports Muralidharan et al.'s (2024) research on generational differences in DEI perceptions.

The absence of gender differences in workplace well-being, despite the female-majority sample, suggests that DEI initiatives may effectively address gender-related workplace challenges. However, this finding should be interpreted cautiously given the unbalanced gender distribution.

5.1 Practical Implications

Organizations should prioritize comprehensive DEI strategies as core components of employee well-being programs. Specific recommendations include:

1. **Leadership Development:** Train managers on inclusive leadership practices and unconscious bias recognition.
2. **Policy Review:** Ensure hiring, promotion, and compensation practices promote equity.
3. **Employee Resource Groups:** Establish support networks for underrepresented groups.
4. **Regular Assessment:** Implement ongoing DEI climate surveys and well-being metrics.
5. **Age-Sensitive Approaches:** Develop generation-specific inclusion strategies recognizing age-related differences.

5.2 Limitations

Several limitations should be noted. The convenience sampling from a single organization limits generalizability. The cross-sectional design prevents causal inferences. The unbalanced demographic representation, particularly regarding gender and organizational levels, may influence findings. Future research should employ longitudinal designs across multiple organizations and industries.

6. Conclusions

This study demonstrates that DEI initiatives significantly enhance workplace well-being in the courier services sector. The strong positive relationship suggests that organizations investing in comprehensive DEI strategies can expect substantial improvements in employee well-being outcomes. Age emerges as a significant moderating factor, indicating the need for generation-sensitive inclusion approaches.

These findings contribute to the growing evidence base supporting DEI as strategic organizational investments rather than mere compliance requirements. For practitioners, the results provide empirical justification for comprehensive DEI programs and highlight the importance of regular assessment and age-appropriate interventions.

Future research should explore industry-specific DEI challenges, examine long-term intervention effects, and investigate cultural factors influencing DEI-wellbeing relationships in diverse organizational contexts.

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