

# Workforce Diversity and Faculty Performance in Higher Education Institutions: An Empirical Study

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose** – This study investigates how faculty diversity shapes performance outcomes in Indian higher-education institutes.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A descriptive survey employing stratified random sampling gathered primary data from 380 faculty members through a structured questionnaire.

**Findings** – Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that ethnic, gender and disciplinary diversity enriches student engagement, elevates teaching quality, stimulates interdisciplinary research collaboration and significantly accelerates adoption of innovative pedagogies and educational technology. Diverse faculties also nurture stronger student–faculty relationships and enhance institutional reputation and competitiveness.

**Practical implications** – Universities should integrate inclusive recruitment, mentorship, anti-bias training and targeted professional-development programmes to unlock the full strategic value of diversity.

**Originality/value** – The study provides empirical evidence linking faculty diversity with multidimensional performance gains in an emerging-economy context.

**Keywords:** Faculty diversity; Performance; Higher education; Inclusion

## INTRODUCTION

The success of academic institutions relies on the commitment, retention, and job satisfaction of their faculty members. When universities foster a positive and supportive environment, academic staff are more likely to experience greater job satisfaction. A healthy university climate not only enhances the academic setting and boosts productivity but also contributes to overall faculty well-being. Moreover, shared values and beliefs,

combined with a positive atmosphere, generate a sense of motivation and drive for success, making job satisfaction an essential factor in academic excellence.

A diverse faculty encompasses a range of ethnicities, genders, ages, abilities, sexual orientations, and academic interests, along with varied perspectives and learning styles. Research has shown that when universities cultivate inclusive environments with a diverse faculty, students tend to report higher satisfaction with their overall experience. Additionally, they develop greater cultural awareness and a deeper understanding of racial diversity. The Faculty Development Programme is a specialized skill-enhancement initiative designed for academic educators, aimed at strengthening their technological, managerial, and subject-specific expertise.

Successful diversity management within an organization ensures that every employee is respected for their culture, character, and skills while recognizing their ability to contribute to the company's success, regardless of caste, age, culture, religion, gender, or ethnicity; Orlando & Susan (1999). As the twenty-first century unfolds, workforce diversity has become a crucial business priority. In today's information-driven era, employees are among a company's most valuable assets. The competition for talent in the workplace is undeniable, and no organization can afford to restrict its ability to attract and retain skilled individuals. According to Clement & Spinks (2009), "Workforce diversity refers to organizations becoming increasingly diverse through the integration of individuals based on gender, religion, age, race, and educational background."

As higher education institutions work toward creating inclusive and dynamic learning environments, faculty diversity is essential in shaping institutional culture, academic discussions, and overall organizational effectiveness. Private universities driven by competitive academic standards and global engagement, gain substantial advantages from a diverse faculty, bringing a range of perspectives, teaching approaches and research expertise. The inclusion of diverse faculty members enriches student learning, fosters intellectual collaboration, and strengthens the university's reputation and academic distinction.

A diverse faculty brings a range of perspectives, enhancing both research output and teaching methods. It also plays a crucial role in fostering an inclusive learning environment, allowing students from various backgrounds to connect with their educators and gain a broader perspective. Additionally, faculty diversity contributes to better problem-solving, greater involvement in interdisciplinary research, and a more comprehensive approach to education. Universities that prioritize diversity often benefit from higher faculty satisfaction, reduced turnover rates, and improved institutional performance. However, to fully leverage these advantages, diversity must be effectively managed. Institutions should implement inclusive policies, mentorship initiatives, and professional development programs to ensure that diverse faculty member's feel supported and valued.

Organizational diversity also plays a significant role in shaping internal culture, leadership practices, and institutional performance. A diverse workforce can enrich interpersonal collaboration, stimulate creativity, and improve team dynamics by encouraging open dialogue and mutual respect. It is particularly relevant in knowledge-intensive sectors like education, healthcare, and technology, where diverse ideas and experiences can drive innovation and improve service delivery. However, the effective management of organizational diversity requires deliberate strategies, such as inclusive recruitment practices, anti-bias training, and equitable career advancement policies. Without these, diversity may remain superficial or even lead to conflict and miscommunication. The concept has gained considerable attention in contemporary research and organizational development models, which emphasize the need for inclusivity not just in demographics but in thought, leadership participation, and institutional decision-making; Shore et al. (2011). A well-integrated diversity strategy ensures that every individual, regardless of their background, feels respected, empowered, and able to contribute meaningfully to the organization's mission.

Workforce diversity plays a vital role in contemporary organizations, shaping workplace dynamics and impacting productivity, teamwork, and innovation. Employees and faculty members often view diversity as an asset, as it introduces a wide range of perspectives, skills, and experiences. A diverse workforce enhances creativity, strengthens problem-solving abilities, and improves decision-making by incorporating diverse viewpoints. When effectively managed, diversity fosters an inclusive and dynamic work environment where employees and faculty feel valued and respected. However, perceptions of workforce diversity can differ based on an organization's culture, policies, and leadership commitment. While some employees and faculty view diversity initiatives as crucial for promoting equity and social justice, others may see them as procedural formalities or potential sources of workplace conflict. The success of diversity policies largely depends on their implementation and communication. Organizations that actively foster inclusivity through training, awareness programs, and equal opportunities tend to cultivate a more positive outlook on diversity among their workforce.

According to Nayyar (1994), job performance is defined as the degree to which an individual fulfills their role in alignment with the specific standards established by the organization. For an organization to achieve its objectives, employees must demonstrate strong job performance. It is essentially the cumulative value that an organization anticipates from an employee's various work-related behaviors over a given timeframe.

Several key factors, including workforce diversity, influence employee performance. This analysis also considers employee performance as a primary construct. Performance refers to executing a responsibility, implementing an action or achieving a goal. Employee performance is defined as the efficient fulfillment of one's duties to generate positive results. It reflects how effectively a worker meets job expectations and is assessed based on productivity, efficiency, work quality and performance evaluations; Kyalo & Gachunga (2015). Focusing on results when assessing individual performance is logical, as outcomes demonstrate how

an employee's actions contribute to or obstruct an organization's objectives. Employees, regardless of their educational background, will perform at varying levels. Their educational experiences also influence their overall productivity. A person's level of education plays a crucial role in determining their effectiveness, making educational background an important factor. Research has shown that ethnically diverse teams sometimes underperform compared to racially homogeneous teams.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Shaw (1993) emphasized the importance of effectively managing a diverse workforce to ensure equal opportunities for all employees. A well-managed diverse workplace fosters inclusivity, enhances employee engagement, and promotes a fair work environment. Additionally, embracing diversity strengthens an organization's ability to compete in the global market by encouraging innovation, improving problem-solving, and increasing adaptability.

Pitts (2009) highlights two key conclusions from the study. Firstly, effective diversity management plays a crucial role in organizational success. Secondly, its significance is even greater for employees of color, as it directly contributes to enhancing their productivity and overall workplace performance.

Arokiasamy (2013) adds to the literature on organizational culture by highlighting the significance of workforce diversity and organizational goals. These factors play a crucial role in fostering employee involvement, ultimately strengthening their commitment to the organization.

Saeed & Lodhi (2013) proposed that workforce diversity positively influences organizational performance. However, they found that management practices do not have a significant impact on effectively managing workforce diversity or enhancing overall performance.

Hassan et al. (2017) explored the impact of board-level diversity on firm performance, revealing both significant benefits and drawbacks. Their findings indicated that gender participation did not have a substantial or definitive effect on performance. Additionally, previous studies also showed mixed and inconsistent results, highlighting the complexity of diversity's role in corporate success.

Makhdoomi (2017) suggested that employees can collaborate effectively with individuals from diverse backgrounds, possessing different traits and characteristics, without experiencing any adverse impact on their performance.

Sohail & Khan (2019) suggested that as workforce diversity increases, so does creativity, skill development, teamwork in problem-solving, and overall organizational performance, all of which are essential for achieving competitive success. They recommended building a diverse team to effectively meet organizational goals.

Kim & Kunze (2020) suggested that the advantages of age diversity in organizations vary, depending on the skills and expertise of their workforce. Some organizations may gain more benefits from an age-diverse team than others, based on how effectively they utilize employee knowledge and abilities.

Chaudhry et al. (2021) found that companies with diverse workforces tend to be more innovative and open to change when employees are effectively integrated into teams. To succeed in an evolving environment, organizations should proactively lead or embrace new business practices at an early stage.

Idowu & Frederick (2022) stressed that business leaders should implement fair and inclusive human resource management practices for their diverse employees. Corporate policies on compensation, promotions, and performance evaluations should be transparent and equitable to ensure fairness and inclusivity across the entire workforce.

Cantilang (2023) conducted a study to examine the relationship between workplace diversity and faculty performance at Eastern Samar State University. The results indicated a weak positive correlation between workplace diversity and faculty performance; however, this relationship was not statistically significant. These findings suggest that while workplace diversity might influence employee performance, it is likely not the sole determining factor.

Taamneh et al. (2024) aimed to investigate the impact of diversity and inclusion on the reputation of Jordanian universities, while also assessing whether employee engagement serves as a mediating factor. The study tested its hypotheses using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings revealed that diversity and inclusion positively and significantly influence the reputation of universities. Additionally, the study found that diversity and inclusion contribute positively to employee engagement.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To analyze the impact of faculty diversity on their performance.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Research Design:** The descriptive research design has been adopted for the present study.

**Method of Sampling:** Researcher employed stratified random sampling in the present study to gather data from various respondents.

**Sample Size= 380 Respondents**

**Primary Data:** In the present study the primary data has been collected from the selected from faculties of higher education institutes.

**Research Instrument:** For the present study, the well-structured questionnaire has been designed to gather the information from the respondents.

## ANALYSIS

Table 1: Table showing the response related to impact of faculty diversity on their performance

S. No.	Impact	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Does faculty diversity enhance student engagement and participation in your institute?	163 (42.90%)	165 (43.42%)	23 (6.05%)	22 (5.78%)	7 (1.85%)
2	Do you agree that Faculty diversity enhances the quality of teaching and knowledge dissemination?	131 (34.48%)	152 (40%)	43 (11.32%)	31 (8.15%)	23 (6.05%)
3	Does diversity among faculty members contribute to better research and academic collaborations?	194 (51.05%)	127 (33.42%)	28 (7.37%)	21 (5.52%)	10 (2.64%)
4	Do you agree that diversity in faculty enhances adaptability to new teaching methods and technological advancements?	144 (37.9%)	162 (42.63%)	29 (7.63%)	29 (7.63%)	16 (4.21%)
5	Do you believe faculty diversity leads to better student-faculty relationships?	175 (46.05%)	152 (40%)	27 (7.11%)	13 (3.42%)	13 (3.42%)
6	Do you agree that faculty diversity positively influences the university's reputation and academic standing?	174 (45.78%)	129 (33.96%)	39 (10.26%)	24 (6.31%)	14 (3.69%)

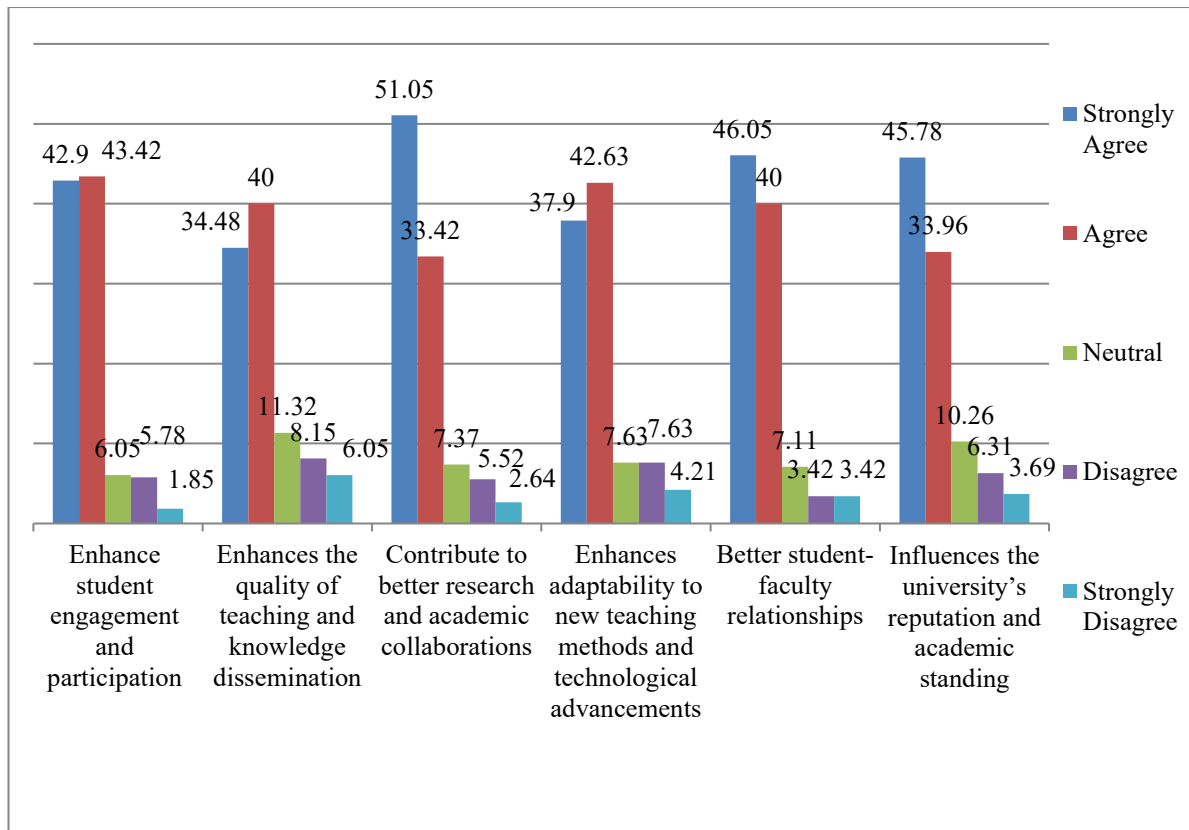


Figure 1: Figure showing the response related to impact of faculty diversity on their performance

**Analysis:** 1. The survey results indicate that a substantial majority of respondents believe faculty diversity enhances student engagement and participation in their institute. Specifically, 42.90% strongly agree, while 43.42% agree, leading to a combined total of 86.32% who recognize the positive impact of diversity in fostering an interactive and engaging learning environment. Meanwhile, 6.05% remain neutral, suggesting that a small portion of respondents are either unsure or do not see a direct correlation between faculty diversity and student participation. On the other hand, 5.78% disagree, and 1.85% strongly disagree, making up a total of 7.63% who do not perceive faculty diversity as a contributing factor to student engagement.

2. The survey results indicate that a majority of respondents believe faculty diversity enhances the quality of teaching and knowledge dissemination. Specifically, 34.48% strongly agree, while 40% agree, resulting in a combined 74.48% who recognize the positive impact of diversity on teaching effectiveness. Meanwhile, 11.32% remain neutral, suggesting some uncertainty or a belief that other factors may play a more significant role in knowledge dissemination. On the other hand, 8.15% disagree, and 6.05% strongly disagree, totaling 14.20% who do not see faculty diversity as a key factor in improving teaching quality.

3. The survey results suggest that a significant majority of respondents believe faculty diversity contributes to better research and academic collaborations. Specifically, 51.05% strongly agree, while 33.42% agree, leading to a combined 84.47% who recognize the positive impact of diversity in fostering interdisciplinary research and collaborative efforts. Meanwhile, 7.37% remain neutral, indicating some uncertainty or a belief that other



factors may play a more prominent role in academic collaborations. On the other hand, 5.52% disagree, and 2.64% strongly disagree, making up a total of 8.16% who do not see faculty diversity as a key driver of research and academic partnerships.

4. The survey results indicate that a majority of respondents believe faculty diversity enhances adaptability to new teaching methods and technological advancements. Specifically, 37.9% strongly agree, while 42.63% agree, leading to a combined 80.53% who recognize the positive role of diversity in fostering innovation and adaptability in education. Meanwhile, 7.63% remain neutral, suggesting that some respondents are uncertain about the direct correlation between diversity and adaptability. On the other hand, 7.63% disagree, and 4.21% strongly disagree, totaling 11.84% who do not see faculty diversity as a significant factor in adopting new teaching methods and technology.

5. The survey results suggest that a significant majority of respondents believe faculty diversity leads to better student-faculty relationships. Specifically, 46.05% strongly agree, while 40% agree, resulting in a combined 86.05% who recognize the positive role of diversity in fostering stronger connections between students and faculty. Meanwhile, 7.11% remain neutral, indicating some uncertainty or the belief that other factors may also influence student-faculty relationships. On the other hand, 3.42% disagree, and an equal 3.42% strongly disagree, totaling 6.84% who do not perceive faculty diversity as a major factor in improving these interactions.

6. The survey results indicate that a significant majority of respondents believe faculty diversity positively influences the university's reputation and academic standing. Specifically, 45.78% strongly agree, while 33.96% agree, leading to a combined 79.74% who recognize diversity as a key factor in enhancing the institution's prestige and credibility. Meanwhile, 10.26% remain neutral, suggesting some uncertainty or the perspective that other factors may play a more dominant role in shaping the university's reputation. On the other hand, 6.31% disagree, and 3.69% strongly disagree, totaling 10% who do not see faculty diversity as a major contributor to academic standing.

## FINDINGS

**1. Faculty Diversity and Student Engagement:** The data suggests that a substantial majority of respondents believe faculty diversity plays a crucial role in enhancing student engagement and participation. A diverse faculty brings varied teaching approaches, cultural perspectives, and experiences that create a more inclusive and dynamic learning environment. This helps students relate to their educators, fostering active involvement in academic discussions and activities. While a small fraction of respondents remain uncertain or disagree, the overall perception is that diversity among faculty members encourages students to participate more effectively, enriching their educational journey.



**2. Impact on Teaching Quality and Knowledge Dissemination:** The findings highlight a strong belief that faculty diversity enhances the quality of teaching and knowledge dissemination. A diverse teaching staff can introduce multiple viewpoints, innovative teaching techniques, and broader subject matter expertise, leading to a richer academic experience for students. Exposure to different perspectives can help learners develop critical thinking skills and a deeper understanding of subjects. While some respondents are uncertain or skeptical about this impact, the majority acknowledge that diversity contributes positively to the effectiveness of instruction and the overall learning process.

**3. Faculty Diversity and Research Collaboration:** There is a strong perception that faculty diversity significantly enhances research and academic collaborations. A varied faculty composition encourages interdisciplinary research, knowledge exchange, and collaborative efforts across different fields of study. Diverse perspectives foster innovation and creativity, leading to new research ideas and methodologies. While a small percentage of respondents express doubts, the dominant view is that institutions with a diverse faculty can benefit from broader networking opportunities, increased research output, and enhanced academic cooperation, ultimately improving the overall quality of scholarly work.

**4. Adaptability to Teaching Innovations and Technology:** The survey results suggest that faculty diversity positively influences adaptability to new teaching methods and technological advancements. A diverse faculty often brings a mix of experiences and skill sets, making institutions more receptive to modern pedagogical approaches and digital tools. This adaptability is essential in today's fast-evolving educational landscape, where technology-driven learning is becoming increasingly important. While some respondents are neutral or skeptical about this correlation, the general consensus indicates that faculty diversity fosters a culture of openness and innovation, helping universities stay at the forefront of educational advancements.

**5. Impact on Student-Faculty Relationships:** The data strongly suggests that faculty diversity leads to better student-faculty relationships by creating an inclusive and supportive academic environment. A diverse faculty enables students from different backgrounds to connect more easily with their instructors, promoting mutual understanding and respect. This diversity fosters open communication, mentorship opportunities, and a sense of belonging among students. Although a small group of respondents do not see faculty diversity as a major factor in improving these relationships, the majority agree that it plays a crucial role in shaping positive student experiences and enhancing overall academic support.

**6. Influence on University Reputation and Academic Standing:** The survey results indicate that faculty diversity is widely regarded as a factor that strengthens a university's reputation and academic standing. A diverse faculty enhances institutional credibility by attracting a broader range of students, faculty, and international collaborations. It reflects the university's commitment to inclusivity, global perspectives, and academic excellence. While some respondents remain neutral or disagree with this notion, the prevailing

belief is that diversity among faculty members helps elevate the university's image, making it more competitive and respected in the academic world.

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