

## **Diversity and Organizational Justice: The Mediating Role of Diversity Management**

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### **Abstract**

*This study was done to know the relationship between diversity (i.e. surface level diversity and deep level diversity), diversity management and organizational justice. This study also explains the mediating effect of diversity management on diversity and organizational justice. A conceptual model was developed and suitable propositions were made and the conclusion as well as the research and managerial implications was also discussed. This study gives an idea about the impact of organizational justice especially among diverse group of employees in the organization.*

**Keywords:** Diversity, Surface level diversity, Deep level diversity, Diversity management, Organizational justice

### **1. Introduction**

The changes in society that lead to closer relationships between political, socio-cultural, and economic events on an international scale is the impact of Globalization (Turek 2004; Urbisiené 2011). In this era of Globalization and movement of work force across borders and countries has created lot of interest among researchers, to understand diversity and diversity management. Research has shown that already the structure of European labor market is changing because of social and economic trends and also shows that demographic composition of the workforce is rapidly changing as population is aging, more women is working in companies, members of different racial and ethnic minorities are moving from country to country (Bedrnová, Novy, 2007). Many multinational organizations are recruiting employees from different countries, race, ethnicity and minority groups. Diversity is happening because of environment, which is generally outside the control of organization and if the organization does not adapt these changes, it may be difficult for organizations to have a sustainable business environment and competitive advantage.

Nkomo and Cox (1996), explained diversity as “a mixture of people with different group identities within the same social system (p. 339)” Based on social categorization and social identity theories (Tajfel, 1981; Turner et. al, 1987) and the similarity–attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971), argues that diversity will instigate ingroup-outgroup distinctions and negative social processes, thereby compromising group performance. They further went on to explain social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978) and self-categorization theory (Turner, 1987) has contributed to an explanation of why diversity may have those negative consequences for employees and the performance of their groups and organizations. These theories suggest that people who are different are less likely to collaborate with one another than people who are similar because they do not consider themselves belong to the same social category (in-group) and thus do not share the same social identity. Similarities and differences are used as a basis for categorizing self and others into groups, with ensuring categorizations distinguishing between one's own in group from one or more out-groups. This process has been named social categorization.

The second argument, based on information and decision-making theories, suggest that diversity will provide a broad range of perspectives, skills, and insights, which can increase the group's creativity and problem-solving capabilities, thereby enhancing performance (Cox, 1993; Cox & Blake, 1991). Heterogeneous groups are therefore likely to be more creative, make higher-quality decisions, and perform better than homogeneous groups (Wanous & Youtz, 1986).

In a simulation study of MBA students, in groups with a collectivistic culture that valued teamwork and rewarded cooperation and team performance, diversity in nationality, sex, and race was more beneficial to performance than in groups with an individualistic culture that valued individual effort and rewarded competition and individual performance (Chatman et al., 1998). One of the important theoretical approach to the study of deep-level diversity is the similarity–attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971), which indicates that people prefer others who exhibit similarity in their interactions. The theory also suggests that individuals are attracted to others who seem similar, because they envision that these individuals reinforce their own preferences, values and beliefs. Harrison et al. (1998, 2002) and Pelled, Eisenhardt, and Xin (1999) also show that surface-level differences such as gender and ethnicity matter less and deep-level characteristics become more important as group members interact over time. More optimistic diversity scholars have argued that diversity can provide a competitive advantage for organizations by increasing the pool of resources—networks, perspectives, styles, knowledge, and insights—that people can bring to bear on complex problems (Cox, 1993; Cox & Blake, 1991).

## ***2. Surface Level Diversity and Deep Level Diversity***

Harrison, Price and Bell (1998) proposed two distinct dimensions of diversity indicators: surface-level diversity and deep-level diversity. They have defined surface-level diversity as “differences among group members in overt, biological characteristics that are typically reflected in physical features” (p. 97). These attributes are visible and easily perceived by individuals. Examples of surface-level diversity would be age, gender, and race/ethnicity. Certain visible stigma such as physically handicap, disfigurement, as well as weight problems (i.e., obesity or anorexia) could also be classified under surface-level diversity. In contrast, deep-level diversity refers to more subtle attributes that cannot necessarily be directly and immediately observed. Such attributes refer to members' personalities, attitudes, beliefs and values. For instance, sexual orientation or religious beliefs could be classified under deep-level diversity. Although lot of discussion revolved around diversity related to age, race, gender, ethnicity, religion and disability status, these days experts now recognize that these demographics are just tip of the iceberg (Robbins & Judge, 2013, p. 76).

Demographics mostly reflects surface level diversity, not thoughts and feelings, and can lead employees to perceive one another through stereotype and assumptions (Harrison et.al 2002, Eagly& Chin 2010). Evidence has also shown that as people get to know one another, they become less concerned about demographic differences if they see themselves as sharing more important characteristics , such as personality and values that represent deep-level diversity ( Chattopadyay, Tluchowska & George ,2004 Chattopadyay, 1999). In general, research suggests that over time, people's focus of attention shifts from surface-level diversity to deep-level diversity (Harrison Price, & Bell, 1998; Mohammed, & Angell, 2004; Van Vianen, De Pater, Kristof-Brown, & Johnson, 2004) Researchers have found both positive and negative effects of demographic diversity on organizational outcomes while many organizations have sought to increase the diversity of their work forces, (Milliken& Martins, 1996; Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007; and Williams & O'Reilly, 1998).

Surface-level or demographic diversity refers to the extent to which a unit is heterogeneous on characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, functional background, and organizational tenure (Lawrence, 1997; Tsui, Egan, & Xin, 1995). In some studies, diverse groups outperformed homogeneous groups (Cox, Lobel, & McLeod, 1991; Ruhe, 1978; Watson, Kumar, & Michaelson, 1993), while in others homogeneous groups avoided the conflicts and communication problems that often beset diverse groups (O'Reilly, Caldwell, & Barnett, 1989; Pelled, 1996; Zenger& Lawrence, 1989). Greater sex diversity should be associated with greater psychological commitment for both men and women, which should positively affect team performance (Ely, 2004). An empirical test confirmed that racial diversity was positively related to firm performance in financial services firms that adopted a growth strategy but negatively related to firm performance in firms that adopted a no- or negative-growth strategy (Richard, 2000).

Mohammed and Angell (2004) in their research has primarily applied similarity–attraction paradigm theory in reference to surface-level diversity (e.g., gender; Dwyer, Richard, & Chadwick, 2003), as individuals work with each other over time, values and personality are more likely to become the basis of similarity–attraction rather than overt, demographic characteristics (Amir, 1969; Byrne, 1971). Drawing on the contradictory findings in this body of research, a review of the literature concluded that ‘diversity appears to be a double-edged sword, increasing the opportunity for creativity as well as the likelihood that group members will be dissatisfied and fail to identify with the group’ (Milliken & Martins, 1996, p. 403). Majority of the research findings through review of literature supports the positive opinion about diversity for the well-being of individual employees as well as the performance of the organization.

### **3. Diversity Management**

Companies always tried to revitalize their management practices as a way of boosting firms’ competitiveness, which resulted in an increased concern for diversity management (Emico&Eunmi, 2009) Diversity increases conflicts which in return may be beneficial or not, depending on the type of conflict that is activated. Three types of conflicts may occur in a diverse group such as task conflict, socio-emotional conflict and value conflict. Task conflict exists when there is disagreement among group members about the content of the tasks being performed, including differences in viewpoints, ideas, and opinions (Jehn, 1995). Socio-emotional conflicts are relationship focused and refer to emotional tensions and negative feelings among group members (Jehn, 1995). Value conflict refers to differences in terms of people's expectations about what constitutes a satisfactory outcome (terminal values) and when such outcome may be achieved (instrumental values) (Gebert, Boerner, & Kearney, 2006). Several other studies examining the impact of diversity at an individual level have shown that when compared to similar individuals, people who are different (dissimilar individuals) have less attraction and trust in peers (Chatopadhyay, 1999), less frequent communication (Zenger & Lawrence, 1989), lower group commitment (Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992), lower task contributions (Kirchmeyer, 1993; Kirchmeyer & Cohen, 1992), lower perceptions of organizational fairness and inclusiveness (Mor-Barak, Cherin, & Berkman, 1998). Surface-level and deep-level characteristics are not always congruent and deep-level differences in task perspective may come from where they are not expected (Janis, 1982; Jehn et al., 1999; Lawrence, 1997). In fact, these incongruent situations may be even more prevalent than congruent ones given the poor signaling power of many surface-level characteristics. Despite the recognition by researchers that “social category diversity may not always reflect other types of diversity (e.g., information diversity and value diversity)” (Jehn et al., 1999, p. 742), little diversity research has moved beyond this assumption of congruence to better understand situations where surface-level and deep-level diversity collide (Katherine & Denise, 2006)

While some have applauded the coupling of business and diversity goals, others have critiqued diversity management, claiming that its underlying corporate liberal norms undermine efforts to include marginalized groups. (Brian & Amrik, 1999, Anshuman, 2001) Since diversity management hinges on economic rationale, it has been lamented as a narrowing of the scope of inclusion, marking a shift from approaches targeted at the removal of barriers to inequality to an approach that sees diversity as ascribed worker attributes to serve the needs of capital (Maria & Shayne, 1995; Sara Ahmed, 2007). There is always a contradicting view among the researchers about diversity management about the outcome whether it is firm performance or individual well-being of the employees. But majority of the researchers are having a positive opinion about diversity management towards individual well-being or firm performance and lot of empirical research validates this opinion.

### **4. Organizational Justice**

The study of justice or fairness has been a topic of philosophical interest that extends back since Plato and Socrates (Ryan, 1993). Efforts to explain the impact of justice on effective organizational functioning have come under the rubric of organizational justice research (Greenberg, 1987, 1990). Justice is a kind of socially perceived approach to come up with a conclusion, what is right and what is not right related to things happening in the organization. Greenberg (1990) described organizational justice as a literature "grown around attempts to describe and explain the role of fairness as a consideration in the workplace" (p. 400). This literature includes both field and laboratory research, and organizational justice has been among the most frequently researched topics in industrial organizational psychology, human resource management, and organizational behavior over the last decade (Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997).

Organizational justice refers to an individual's perceptions of and reactions to fairness in an organization (Greenberg, 1987). Prior research has conceptualized organizational justice along three primary dimensions: distributive, procedural, and interactional (Colquitt et. al, 2001, Cohen & Spector, 2001). Distributive justice refers to the equity of distribution of resources and decision outcomes, while procedural justice concerns the perceived fairness of processes that lead to outcomes (Greenberg &Corpanzano, 2001). The third dimension, interactional justice, deals with the perceived fairness of treatment received by an individual (Bies&Moag, 1986). Interactional justice is conceptualized along two sub-dimensions: informational and interpersonal. Informational justice focuses on the degree to which individuals are provided with adequate information that explains decisions made or actions taken, while interpersonal justice captures the degree to which individuals are treated with politeness, dignity, and respect. (Colquitt et. al, 2001, Bies & Moag, 1986)

The view of Adams (1965), what people were concerned about was not the absolute level of outcomes per se but whether those outcomes were fair. Adams's theory advocated the use of an equity rule to determine fairness, several other allocation rules have also been identified, such as equality and need (e.g., Leventhal, 1976). Studies have shown that different contexts (e.g., work vs. family), different organizational goals (e.g., group harmony vs. productivity), and different personal motives (e.g., self-interest motives vs. altruistic motives) can activate the use or primacy of certain allocation rules (Deutsch, 1975). Leventhal and colleagues can be credited for extending the notion of procedural justice into non-legal contexts such as organizational settings (Leventhal, 1980; Leventhal et al., 1980). In doing so, Leventhal and colleagues also broadened the list of determinants of procedural justice far beyond the concept of process control.

Leventhal's theory of procedural justice judgments focused on six criteria that a procedure should meet if it is to be perceived as fair. Procedures should be applied consistently across people and across time such as to be free from bias (e.g., ensuring that a third party has no vested interest in a particular settlement, ensure that accurate information is collected and used in making decisions, have some mechanism to correct flawed or inaccurate decisions, conform to personal or prevailing standards of ethics or morality, and ensure that the opinions of various groups affected by the decision have been taken into account. Bies and Moag (1986) referred to these aspects of justice as "interactional justice." More recently, interactional justice has come to be seen as consisting of two specific types of interpersonal treatment (e.g., Greenberg, 1990, 1993). The first, labeled interpersonal justice, reflects the degree to which people are treated with politeness, dignity, and respect by authorities or third parties involved in executing procedures or determining outcomes. The second, labeled informational justice, focuses on the explanations provided to people that convey information about why procedures were used in a certain way or why outcomes were distributed in a certain fashion. In this research, the impact on organizational justice is influenced by diversity management.

### ***5. Conceptual Framework and Proposition Development***

Classical diversity management practices aim to correct majority individuals' stereotyping and prejudices (e.g. diversity training), to limit the discretion of biased decision makers regarding allocation and rewarding decisions (e.g. formalization of HRM procedures), and to compensate for majority's exclusion of minorities due to their bias (e.g. networking and mentoring programs). Although social psychology acknowledges that contextual factors play a key role in triggering or diminishing negative in-group/out-group dynamics (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew Tropp, 2006) Diversity management seeks to promote a broad notion of diversity including differences of perspective and lifestyle in addition to designated groups. When diversity is understood as an assemblage of difference that is non-hierarchical, however, the concept of difference is extirpated from its links to discrimination and inequality, rendering it difficult to address racism, sexism or systemic disadvantage that produce persistent unequal outcomes ( Sara, 2007) .

Unlike formal equality which is also underpinned by liberal ideas, diversity management purports to move away from the same treatment of individuals in such a way so as to simultaneously advance corporate 'needs' to rationalize production to maintain excess profits. Yet the same factors that drive the quest for difference also help to confine it. Although a certain degree of difference has been shown to increase profits, the market also homogenizes difference by requiring that workers conform to strict productivity requirements. In particular, forms of difference that challenge the firm's corporate liberal culture are excluded. It is not the concept of difference that limits diversity management's utility; instead, it is the particular way that inclusion becomes defined in ways

that are detrimental both to collective empowerment of workers and to the inclusion of meaningful differences (Suzanne, 2011).

Originating from different and often conflicting theoretical and political movements, diversity politics denotes a broad discursive space that includes a variety of perspectives that share a need for the recognition and valuation of difference. While some perspectives continue to emphasize how differences are constructed to legitimize unequal and oppressive relationships, other approaches seek to escape hierarchies of oppression through the evaluation and celebration of individual or collective difference (George, 2005; Iris, 1990).

Consequently, understanding one category of oppression necessitates understanding how it intersects with other categories of oppression. An intersectional approach can provide insights to the way liberal workplace practices interact with local constructions of identity. Theories of intersectionality add to our knowledge of employment inequality by calling attention to the lived experiences of individuals who have been historically neglected from labor research and are constructed as suitable or unsuitable for specific types of workplaces by employers and co-workers respectively. (Patricia, 2000; Beverley, 2005, Melissa, 1997). Most of the research studies reviewed shows that diversity management positively influences diversity (i.e. surface level and deep level diversity) to minimize the conflict. On the backdrop of these review, the researcher proposes:

- P1: Diversity management positively mediates the relation between surface level diversity and Organizational justice
- P2: Diversity management positively mediates the relation between deep level diversity and Organizational justice
- P3: There is a positive relationship between diversity management and organizational justice.

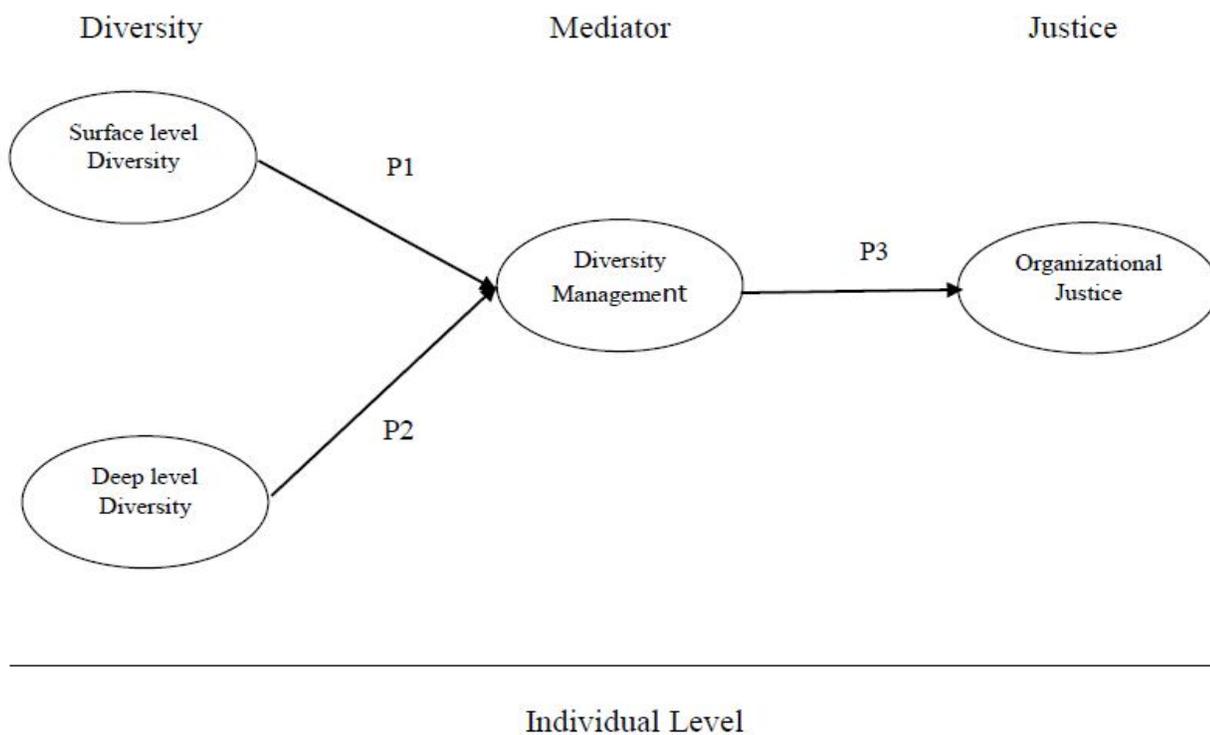


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

## **6. Conclusion**

The researcher in this study is only focused on surface level diversity and deep level diversity other than any other kinds of diversity. The researcher consciously treats diversity management as mediator because mediating events shift role from effects to cause, depending on the focus of analysis (Reuben & David, 1986). Lot of research has been done on diversity and diversity management and most of the existing research focused on group outcome rather than individual perspective. Few studies suggests that procedural justice mediates the effects of management practices on employees' commitment to organizations (Folger&Konovsky, 1989; McFarlin& Sweeney, 1992). Relying on the existing reviews, the current studies focuses on how surface level and deep level diversity is mediated by diversity management in terms of organizational justice.

## **7. Research Implication**

Diversity management is held to be a reflection of the commitment management philosophy. Companies pursuing commitment HR practices also tend to utilize diversity management, including family friendly policies (e.g., Osterman, 1995). Employees' commitment may be influenced by how organizations treat them in terms of distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice. A large number of studies have sought to link justice perceptions to a variety of organizational outcomes, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, withdrawal, and organizational citizenship behavior (Colquitt et. al, 2001). The response of these individual traits will always be on the basis of how they are treated in terms of justice in the organization. Review outcome has clearly indicated that wise diversity management will positively influences the justice perception of individuals as well as minimizes the conflicts that arises in terms of surface- level and deep level diversity.

## **8. Managerial Implication**

Managers should always keep in mind, how an external intervention (in this research, diversity management) will influence internal psychological significance (in this research organizational justice) of the individuals. The meanings of sameness/equality and difference/diversity are overlapping and need to be understood in the context of their use (Joan, 1994) .The implementation of diversity management often resembles other approaches to inclusion, and therefore includes practices such as: diversity awareness education, targeted hiring and promotion practices, heightened discrimination and harassment awareness and flexible work options to adapt to different worker lifestyles. Despite its similarity to equality-based approaches in many of its practices, however, diversity management conceptualizes diversity differently; policies are not restricted to groups identified through legislation or otherwise and are cast at the level of the individual (Suzanne, 2011). The researcher explains these intricacies through this simple conceptual model that may help the managers to design efficient diversity management programs to minimize the conflict of diversity and maximize the equity among employees in the organization.

## **9. Limitations and areas of Future Research**

There is a challenge to establish diversity management, purely on the basis of individual perspective and probably there is need of incorporating some moderating variables or intervening variables to clarify the cause and effect relationship of diversity management on organizational justice. Another issue is lot of research is done related to diversity in Western set up. It may be difficult to universalize the perception of researcher until and unless, it is empirically tested to validate the propositions. Future researchers should carefully analyze other diversity issues (for example. ethnic diversity) that influence of diversity management and its outcome on organizational justice.

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