RESEARCH ARTICLE

Fostering safe and inclusive workplace toward a sustainable and high-performing work culture

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Abstract
The purpose of the article is to reiterate the importance of five factors: safety, diversity, equity, inclusion and open communication for organizational success. Safe and inclusive workplaces are essential for promoting employee well-being, productivity, and overall organizational success. Creating such environments may require a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, along with effective policies and practices.

The article is descriptive in nature and has studied the arguments of various researchers in order to understand the significant contribution of safety, diversity, equity, inclusion and open communication for organizational success. We have found that in spite of policies on workplace safety, diversity and inclusion, there is the existence of biases that keep women at bay. We also found that an open communication policy exists in workplaces by and large. However, is not utilized to its full potential due to biases. Equity in the workplace fosters gender diversity. However, women face gender biases in the workplace. The current study is unique. Most practitioners fall into the game of individual biases and is a great threat to workplace safety, diversity and inclusion. By fostering a culture of inclusion, organizations can benefit from the diverse perspectives and talents of their employees, leading to increased innovation, engagement, and success.

Keywords: Workplace safety, Security, Open communication, diversity, inclusion.

Introduction

Diversity is about acknowledging individual differences within the workforce and understanding that it fuels creativity and productivity, while inclusion is about embracing differences and providing the tools to empower employees, managers, and HR to ensure that every employee has the feeling of being part of the organization. On the other hand, inclusion gaps are not that easy to spot because they are difficult to measure and subjective (Smith, 2018).

As (Myers, 2016) said, "Diversity is invited to the party - inclusion is invited to the dance." In the workplace, at a party, diversity isn't just about getting hired and being a symbolic and diverse candidate. Organizations should encourage an inclusive mindset with every experience by encouraging them to dance. This increases productivity and encourages creativity to give employees a sense of ownership, especially when working remotely. These experiences also provide visibility and access regardless of who one is or where one is (Zoder, 2021).

Elevated degrees of uniformity, variety and incorporation are related to more prominent advancement, efficiency and execution, ability enlistment and maintenance, and labor force prosperity. It was found that the main portion of respondents said that variety and consideration were adequately recognized and resourced in their working environments' way of life and technique. The investigation discovered that the sensation of work environment consideration was bound to be related to rank rather than individual foundation or attributes like age, orientation, identity, race, and religion.

It frames four vital standards for accomplishing groundbreaking and maintainable change that are relevant universally and to all labor force gatherings and levels: variety and consideration ought to be fundamentally important and part of system and culture; there should be variety in top administration; senior pioneers, supervisors and staff should

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be responsible as good examples; also, activities should apply all through work - covering enlistment, maintenance, and improvement (Geneva (ILO News), 2022).

The objectives of the study are: 1) To review workforce diversity and inclusion through literature and underpinning theories. 2) To understand the various dimensions of workforce diversity.

A different and comprehensive climate lays out a feeling of having a place among workers, causing them to feel more associated and useful. Associations that take on D&I rehearses see immense additions as business results, development, and navigation. Organizations need to incorporate variety, value, and consideration since it shows purchasers and workers that you won't hesitate to give chances to all individuals. Everybody merits a chance to show their work abilities, and having DEI in a business allows everybody an opportunity.

The Value of Diversity

Diversity enhances collaboration, creativity, innovation, decision-making, and the productivity of individuals and teams. These studies frequently concentrate on variables including ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic position. Nonetheless, it is equally crucial to acknowledge that diversity of thought holds significant importance. Organizations must cultivate an inclusive culture that embraces diverse social, economic, and political backgrounds, as well as a broad range of experiences, learning pathways, and communication styles. Leaders must provide a secure atmosphere of transparency, trust, and mutual respect that facilitates the sharing of ideas in a civil and productive manner.

Inclusive Leadership

Advancing beyond diversity and equality in the workplace, particularly by fostering a variety of thought, is crucial for our initiatives to recruit and retain top talent while ensuring that every employee is accorded dignity and respect.

Assist your team members in recognizing that they are genuinely acknowledged and appreciated, that they are essential, desired, and possess a substantial opportunity to influence the organization's success and future strategic trajectory. Transform your organization into an environment that attracts individuals and fosters their development.

Moreover, Steve Yacovelli, author of Pride Leadership and an authority on organizational inclusion and LGBTQ+ advocacy, asserts that a consciously inclusive leader must not only identify and comprehend unconscious biases but also actively cultivate a culture of diversity, inclusion, and belonging within the organization (Westover, 2020). He stated, "Diversity is invited to dance, and inclusion is invited to dance." Belonging signifies experiencing comfort and desirability while dancing. A sense of belonging is essential for a more productive and fulfilling work environment.

Inclusive Organizational Culture

To establish an inclusive workplace, we must transcend diversity and equality, extending these initiatives to cultivate an inclusive organizational culture. The author recently illustrated a three-way Venn diagram depicting the intersections of diversity, equality, and inclusion in a medium article (Figure 1). At the intersection of the three is what is referred to as "belonging." The author asserts that membership is achieved when an organization "realizes the full potential of the individual, innovation flourishes, and opinions, beliefs, and values are embedded within the organization and the culture" (Westover J. H., 2021).

DEIB – Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belongingness

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, unlearning unconscious prejudices has become essential. Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) have recently become vital to the workplace, prompting even traditional organizations to adopt change and foster a more varied environment. Encompassed, fostering a sense of belonging is another crucial aspect to contemplate. Employees who perceive themselves as integral to a larger mission and feel appreciated for their contributions are more inclined to exhibit loyalty to the organization and enhance its success, resulting in reduced turnover compared to those organizations that do not prioritize DEIB (Nicola Harris, 2023).

Workplace Safety and Security

For too many LGBTQ individuals, discrimination is a way of life, whether it be in the workplace or outside the home. Workplace discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual,
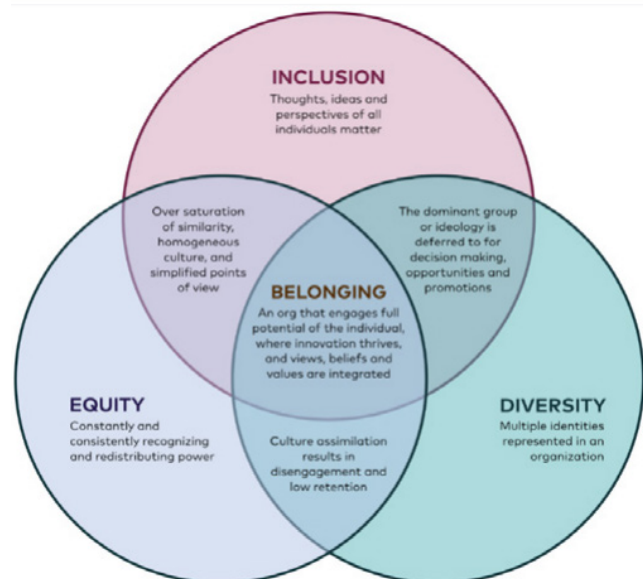
Figure 1: Three-way Venn diagram of the intersections of inclusion, equality and diversity. (Source: Leadership Excellence presented by HR.com)

and transgender (LGBTQ) individuals remains a persistent problem in global conglomerates. Though companies have reportedly benefited from their action to support LGBTQ rights in the workplace, it is still a daunting task for global companies that conduct business in jurisdictions that do not promote LGBTQ individuals and sometimes penalize and prosecute LGBTQ individuals. A more challenging task is to extend non-discrimination protection and offer equitable benefits to LGBTQ employees while adhering to local laws and customs. (Kaufman, 2020)

It also suggests that being an LGBTQ-friendly employer and adopting LGBTQ practices has a positive effect on stock prices. Companies that score high in the corporate equality index are more likely to see an increase in their stock market performance in the following year.

Another exciting finding shown by a study is that employees who are open about their sexual orientation are more productive and positive-minded and are happier than those who hide or are forced to hide their sexual orientation. (Das, 2020)

Methodology

This conceptual study is based entirely on secondary data. It involves a comprehensive review of existing literature, industry reports, case studies, and global frameworks on diversity, inclusion, and workplace culture. Peer-reviewed journals, organizational publications, and reports from credible institutions like the ILO were analyzed to identify trends, challenges, and best practices. The findings were synthesized to develop insights into how inclusion, diversity, and experience contribute to creating safe and inclusive workplaces. This approach ensures a robust theoretical foundation for understanding and promoting workplace inclusivity.

Results

Proposed model for safe and inclusive workplace

The proposed model to foster a safe and inclusive workplace focuses on three dimensions to deliver a high-performance culture (Figure 2), namely inclusion, diversity and experience.

Inclusion

The inclusion at the workplace should include respect for the employees in the organization. Respect would include a positive behavioral foundation and ensuring psychological safety. The employees should have a feeling of social belongingness for the organization. In order to ensure the same fair progression, inclusion would be a great instrument. It also leads to the empowerment of employees to ensure high-performing organizational culture.

Diversity

Diversity Culture can bring an edge to a high-performance culture. Gender diversity forms an important part of it.

Figure 2: The proposed organizational model for fostering a safe and inclusive workplace

Researches show that there exists a considerable gap in pay and a glass ceiling does exist for female employees. Gender, racial, religious, and regional diversity can be reflected in hiring, promotions, transfers and other growth opportunities.

Experience

In order to foster safe and inclusive workplaces, it is important to enhance the employee experience. Organizations should not fail to appreciate the efforts and efficacy. Organizations have a huge responsibility to maintain high employee morale for a high-performance culture. This can be achieved through ensuring psychological safety. Psychological safety merely does not mean niceness or absence of risk factors. It means the provision to disagree and put forward views without the fear of being misunderstood and misconceptions.

Discussion

An effective workplace starts by creating a mentoring program. This can be accomplished by working with business leaders to explain the practice of mentoring and the many benefits of happier, healthier employees. A 13% increase in productivity for happier employees whose basic emotional needs are being met, such as through mentoring practices, is just one of the many reasons why mentoring not only creates a better work environment but also increases profits and savings.

Creating a safe and inclusive workplace requires a multifaceted approach that incorporates inclusion, diversity, and experience. Inclusion involves fostering an environment where all employees feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives (Abbas, 2023).

Inclusive leadership practices and open communication channels can achieve this. Diversity encompasses embracing and celebrating differences in race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and other dimensions, ensuring representation at all levels of the organization (Kirby *et al.*, 2023). Experience plays a crucial role in shaping workplace culture, as it involves

leveraging the varied backgrounds and skills of employees to drive innovation and problem-solving (Jung *et al.*, 2024). By integrating these three parameters, organizations can create a workplace where all individuals feel safe to express themselves, collaborate effectively, and reach their full potential, ultimately leading to increased productivity and employee satisfaction.

A company will be successful when employees of the same company interact with each other as colleagues and not as competitors. The mentoring program will enable employees at all levels to build strong working relationships in which to seek or provide guidance to boost employee morale, provide avenues and platforms for critical dialogue, and foster a stronger workforce, more compassionate and efficient.

Conclusion

In conclusion, fostering a safe and inclusive workplace demands a comprehensive approach that integrates diversity, inclusion, and experience. By embracing differences, ensuring equal opportunities, and creating an environment of psychological safety, organizations can build a culture of belonging and mutual respect. Mentoring programs and inclusive leadership practices further strengthen employee relationships, boost morale, and enhance productivity. A commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) not only drives innovation and retention but also empowers employees to thrive as valued contributors. Organizations that prioritize these principles are better positioned to achieve sustainable growth, high performance, and long-term success.

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