

MANAGING CULTURAL DIVERSITY AT WORKPLACE: THE HR CHALLENGE AND ITS IMPACT ON ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE - A STUDY OF SINGAPORE

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ABSTRACT

The research paper has the primary objective which is to assess and determine the impact of cultural diversity on the organizations in Singapore. The research objectives that guided the research process are as follows: (1) to examine whether cultural diversity in the workplace has a positive effect on customers' related issues. (2) To determine whether employee cultural value system affect organizational performance. (3) To establish what organizations are doing to manage diversity and (4) to propose a solution on how to handle cultural diversity in the workplace.

The research applies to administer of questionnaires as the primary method of data collection. To gather quantitative data, the interviews were done through email where the respondent filled the questionnaire from various organizations. The interview covered employees and customers from different organizations within Singapore. The data collected for the project was analyzed using the SPSS software and regression analysis descriptive data while the qualitative data, content analysis approach was used.

The study found that there was a positive correlation between cultural diversity and organizational performance. The study found a strong positive relationship between cultural diversity and productivity of the organization and in customer service delivery. Among the challenges that the research explored in cultural diversity in the workplace includes 1) Ethnic and cultural differences, 2) belief accommodation, 3) respect and acceptance and 4) gender equality issues among different cultures. The study recommends various measures that an organization can use to overcome challenges associated with cultural diversity. The recommendations include: 1) diversity training among the employees, 2) Widening the recruitment base, 3) offering language training and 4) creation of an evaluation form.

Keywords: *Belief Accommodation, Gender Equality, Cultural Diversity, Recruitment*

INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, the increasing globalization requires more cultural interaction from diverse cultures and experiences to enable working places to be more appropriate for work. This mainly enables workers to have different thoughts and solutions to the widespread working problems as there is always an existing answer to different problems, as people tend to work together (Buelens, Kreitner & Kinicki, 2002). Moreover, this is also because people no longer work in insular working areas, which have increasingly broadened the problem-solving capabilities. Consequently, the profit and non-profit making organizations require to have a well-framed diversity as it will promote more creativity among the people. As a result, most of the organization's strategic goals and objectives have been achieved (Brown *et al.*, 2010). The work aims in discussing and providing a well-framed analysis on the cultural diversities in the workplaces.

The Problem Statement

The cultural work diversity consists of several importance which mainly consist of increased adaptability to the success and competitiveness of different organizations. If an organization embraces diversity in the workplaces, the probability of the company to succeed in its activities is always very high (Bellini *et al.*, 2013). Employees from different cultural diversity bring about their adaptability and talents making the organization and the other colleagues be flexible and be problem solvers.

Moreover, diversity also increases the range of the services offered to the company as due to the different level of experiences that the employees usually have. Consequently, the services provided to the customers increases thus promoting the company service providence and the quality of the services (Laroche, 2012).

However, although the importance of cultural diversity in the working places is very vital, little has been done by most of the researchers in the aim to encourage and explore more on its importance. Therefore, the study aims in providing detailed information concerning the cultural diversity in workplaces and its importance.

Purpose of the Study

The main aim of the study is to provide detailed information concerning the cultural diversity in workplaces. It also aims to provide a clear guideline, which will encourage different organization in the world to embrace cultural diversity.

Research question of the study

Notably, the research aims to answer specific questions that will explain the main statement of the problem. The main research question consists of-

- I) Does workforce diversity have a positive effect on customers' related issues?
- II) What are the employee value systems that affect organizational performance?
- III) What are organizations doing to manage cultural diversity?

Research Objective

- I. To determine whether workforce diversity has a positive effect on customers' related issues.
- II. To determine whether employee value system affect organization performance.
- III. To establish what organisations are doing to manage diversity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Culture

Culture is mainly defined to be characteristics of a specific group of people in the way they carry out their activities. This mainly refers to their beliefs, language, food, religion and their social habits. According to Bhabha (2012), culture refers to continuously shared behaviours, cognitive paradigms among a group of people that are usually shared through the process of socialisation. Such characteristics differ from one group of people to another.

Diversity

Diversity refers to the state of being composed of different elements that constitute a group of people. For instance, there may be the inclusion of different types of cultures among a group of the organization in the

working places (Adams & Bell, 2016).

Cultural Diversity

Assorted variety is a frequently utilized idea in a large portion of the working spots in the innovative world. This is for the most part since it is a widely felt that mean different implications among the general population. As indicated by Crisp & Turner (2011), a decent variety is a challenged term, and there are various meanings of the idea. Nevertheless, numerous individuals allude assorted variety to race and ethnicity.

Amid the most recent couple of decades, principally because of globalization, working environments have turned out to be considerably more broadened. Organizations increasingly more mirror the heterogeneity of their social orders (Escobedo, Jett & Lao, 2012).

Dimension of Managing Cultural Diversity

In the modern world, there exist different cultural activities and beliefs, which require individuals to be able to manage their cultural diversities. In many organizations, globalization has seen the effects of international organizational implications in organizational activities. In most cases, when cultural diversities are not well utilised, it ends up creating unwanted conflicts among the people (Ferraro & Briody, 2013).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology

In this section, the study will cover the main theories that will be used in the study. It will also explain the main reason for the choice of subject and preconception. This will also be based on the selected case study in Sweden.

Choice of subject

The main reason why cultural diversity was chosen as the main subject of this study is due to the increased globalization in the world today. This has necessitated different specialist to be employed in a different organization despite their cultural differences. A good case study is in Sweden which most of the companies and organization have been doing well although the central workers are usually from the diverse cultural basis. Most of the employees in that are performing well such as car manufacturing, and soft drink companies consist of well-constituted cultural diversities (Banks, 2015).

RESEARCH DESIGN

A research purpose is a basic scheme that seeks to give the intended results of the study. The study will use the graphics model, which will mainly be describing different individuals and their work, different situations and how they affected the wellbeing of the research and the study groups to be used in the study (Stahl *et al.*, 2010). With the use of this study, it will be easy to predict the primary relationship that exists in the cultural diversity in the working places and its effects on the organization. It will also be helpful to guide the existing relationship between different economic activities.

Population

The population is the collection of all the properties that a researcher wishes to use in his or her study. In this case, the study will mainly focus on how different cultural activities and the cultural diversities enable the organizations to be able to carry out their activities. This will guide the study by investigating if there exists any relationship between cultural diversity and the successful business (Gay, 2010). The firms will help the study to provide the required information in different sectors to be able to give a specific definition of the primary objective of the study. Moreover, with the use of such a population, it will be easier to come up with the best results in the research.

Data Collection Method

The study will mainly use questionnaires and a case study which will be very helpful to get the required information. The study aims to use the defined secondary sources of information. It will also use the online questionnaires, which will be filled by different researchers in the world. Such information will base a good argument for the results, which will be discussed in the research project (O'Leary, 2017). The questionnaire, which will gather more information from the commercial facilities, companies, and other business organisations, will be provided at the end of the proposed research project.

The questionnaire was structured in a way that it administered all the required objectives and aims of the study. This was mainly done to reach a comprehensive and reliable conclusion from what was being expected from the selected organisations in Sweden. Moreover, the research also aimed to focus on the identified big organisations.

Data Analysis

The primary method that will be provided in the research will mainly be quantitative. Whereby it will analyse the information obtained in the form of tables, graph and flow charts. It will also include the use of percentage to show the various changes due to the use of cultural diversity working places. The tables will mainly consist of different values, which will consist of different values and years (Ho, 2006). It will also incorporate the profit book records for the consecutive years which will primarily be to know if there exists any relationship between companies that are using cultural diversities and others which do not use.

Secondary Data

In addition to the primary data corrected from the research, secondary data also played a significant role in answering the research questions and objectives. It is also improved on the quality of the study results and conclusion of the study. This has critically been analysed and compared to the primary data that was collected in the field from both the case study and the use of the questionnaires.

The Swedish Statistical Bureau (SCB) also enabled the study to be more focused as it enabled the study to be laid on a strategic basis of a case study on the Sweden organisations and cultural working experiences in cultural diversity. Lastly, the company's website also enabled us to understand more about the working achievement of different organisations.

RESULTS

Regression result

Regression Analysis: The regression was informed by the research question does workforce diversity have a positive effect on customers' related issues?

This led to the hypothesis:

Null: Workforce diversity does not have a positive effect on customers' related issues

Alternative: Workforce diversity has a positive effect on customers' related issues

The regression findings show that having employees from diverse backgrounds had a $p = 0.147 > 0.05$ hence the null hypothesis for no effect was accepted. This implies that having employees from diverse backgrounds does not have significant effect on customer service delivery. On the other hand, the variable cultural diversity improves organizational

production had a $p=0.00 < 0.05$ hence the null hypothesis for no effect was rejected. This implies that having cultural diversity improves organizational production has significant effect on customer service delivery (refer to table 1).

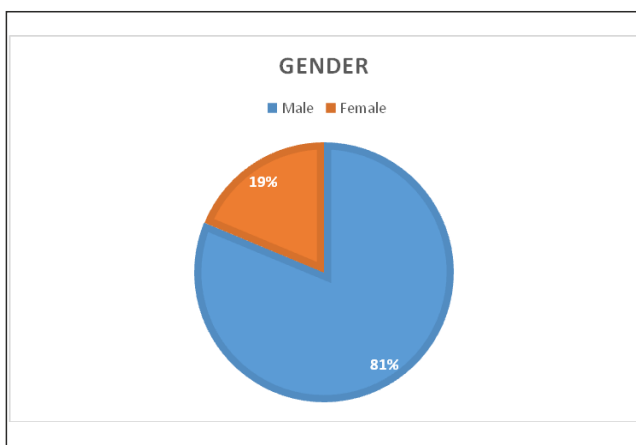
Table 1: Regression Findings

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	21.991a	7	3.142	13.274	0.00
Intercept	74.094	1	74.094	313.065	0.00
Does your organization employ people from diverse cultural background	0.505	1	0.505	2.136	0.47
Do you think cultural diversity creates a competitive edge to the organization	0.98	3	0.327	1.38	0.253
Do you think cultural diversity improves organizational production	8.149	3	2.716	11.477	0.000
Error	25.561	108	0.237		
Total	372	116			
Corrected Total	47.552	115			

Survey Results

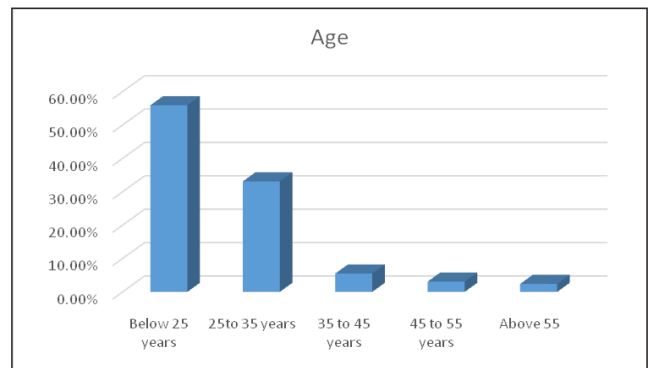
This section consists of two main parts, the first part gives demographic information of the participants while the second part provides extra information about the respondents.

Figure 1: Gender Distribution



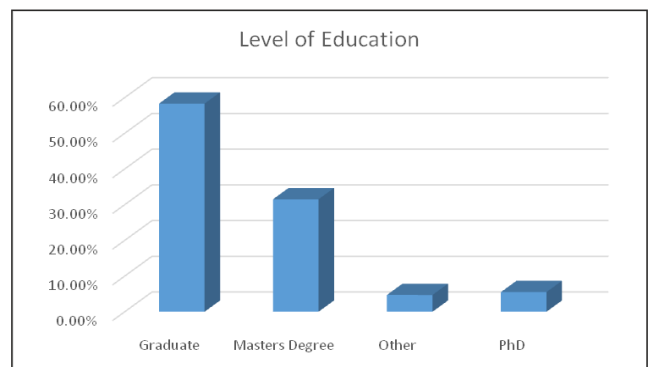
The above chart shows that a majority of those who took part were male who accounted for 81% while female was 19%.

Figure 2: Age Distribution



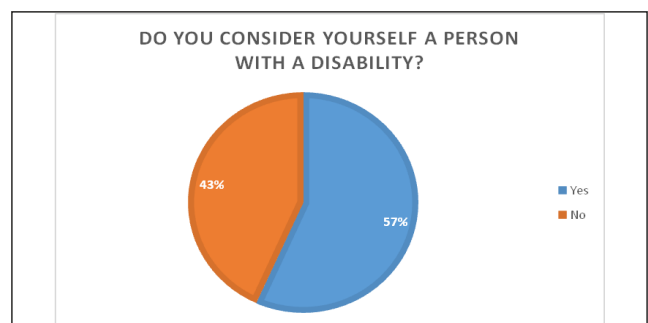
The above chart shows that most of those who participated in the study were aged below 25 years followed by those between 25 to 35 years. The third most participants were aged 35 to 45 years, followed by those aged 45 to 55 years. The fewest employees were those of more than 55 years. As such most of those who took part were youths.

Figure 3: Level of Education



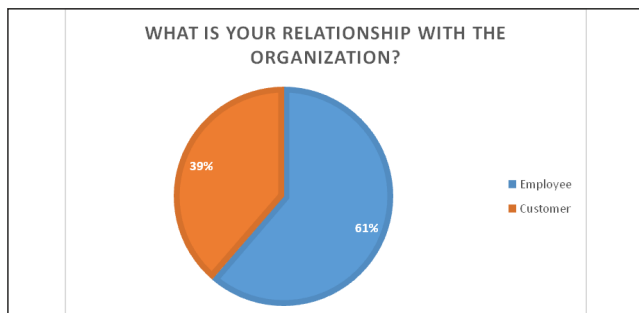
Graduates made up the highest proportion of those who took part as evident from 58.3% followed by that master's degree who accounted 31.5%. Those with PhD were the least and they made up 5.5%. Those of with other levels of education were 4.7%.

Figure 4: Distribution of Individuals with Disability



As evident from 57% said they consider themselves as people with disability while 43% were of the view that they are not persons with disability.

Figure 5: Relationship with the Organization



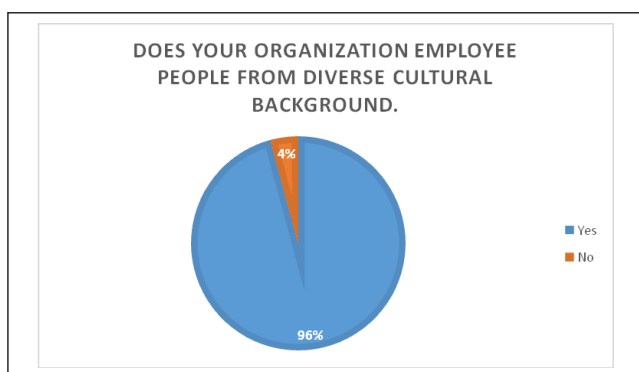
When asked what their relationship with the organization is 61% said they were employees while 39% said they were customers.

Figure 6: Duration of Work in the Organization



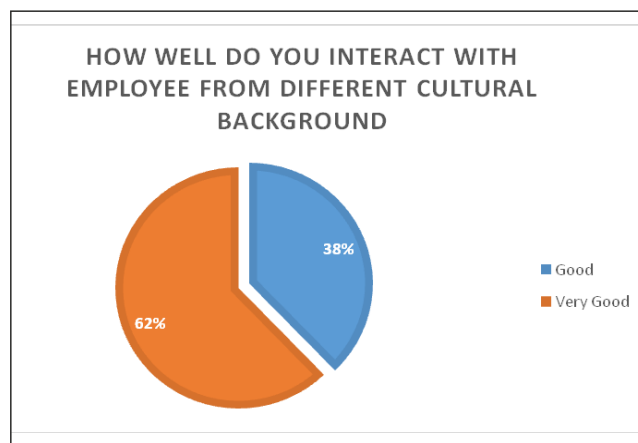
The results as indicated in the figure showed that 50.9% had worked in the organization for less than years. Similarly, 36.6% had worked for between 3 to 5 years. Only 8% had worked for between 5 to 10 years while 4.5% had worked for more than 10 years. This provides more information about the duration in which the organization spend with their employees and consequently the relationship between the two parties.

Figure 7: Employees Cultural Background



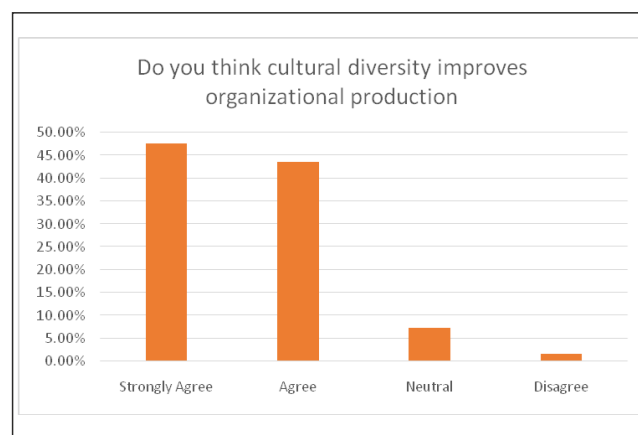
A majority of those who took part agreed that the organization employs people from diverse cultural background. This was evident from 96% of those who took part who said yes while only 4% believed the organization does not employ persons from diverse backgrounds. Base on the information presented on the chart, it can be concluded that the organization embraces the idea of diversity during employment of its employees.

Figure 8: Level of Interaction with the Employee



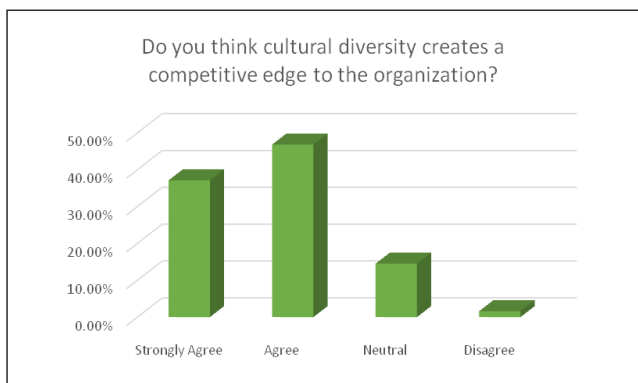
When asked how well they interact with employee from different cultural background most of the respondents were of the affirmative opinion. In particular 62% said yes that they interact with employee from different cultural background while 38% said they do not interact well with employee from different cultural background. This indicates that the composition of employees within the organization is diversified in terms of persons with different body conditions or abilities.

Figure 9: Relationship Between Cultural Diversity and Organizational Production



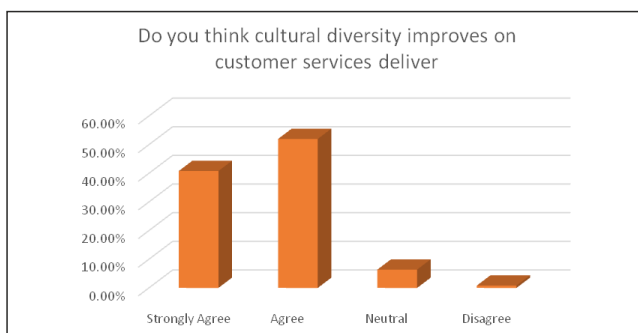
The above chart shows that half of the respondents strongly agreed that they thought cultural diversity improves organizational production. In the same line 43.5% agreed that they thought cultural diversity improves organizational production. Similarly, 7.3% were neutral that diversity improves organizational production. Only 1.6% disagreed that diversity does not improve organizational production. The depicted information from the chart suggest that indeed the incorporation of people of various cultural background leads to an improvement of production in an organization.

Figure 10: Relationship Between Cultural Diversity and Customer Services



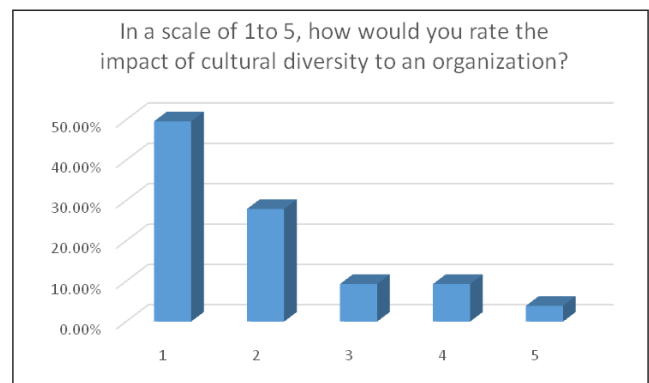
The findings from the chart above show that most of those who took part were positive that diversity creates a competitive edge to the organization. In particular 37.1% strongly agreed that diversity creates a competitive edge to the organization. In the same line 46.8% agreed that that diversity creates a competitive edge to the organization. Similarly, 14.5% were neutral when asked if diversity creates a competitive edge to the organization. Only 1.6% disagreed that diversity does not create a competitive edge to the organization. This indicates that suggest that cultural diversity improves customer service delivery.

Figure 11: Impact of Cultural Diversity on Competitive Edge of the Organization



The results as indicated in the chart above revealed that a majority of those who took part in the study believed cultural diversity improved customer service delivery. 40.8% strongly agreed that cultural diversity improves customer service delivery while only 0.8% disagreed that cultural diversity does not improve customer service delivery. In addition, 52% agreed that cultural diversity improves customer service delivery while only 6.4% were neutral that cultural diversity improves customer service delivery. In this case it can be generalized that cultural diversity creates a competitive edge to the organization.

Figure 12: Impact of cultural Diversity to an Organization



Most of those who took part in the study gave a scale of at least 3. A look at the graph shows that 49.6% gave a rating of 1 that cultural diversity has an impact on the organization while only 3.9% gave a rating of 5. The rating of 2 that cultural diversity has an impact on the organization was given by 27.9%. Only 9.3% gave ratings of 3 and 4 respectively that cultural diversity has an impact on the organization.

Relating Research Findings and the Existing Literature

A Case Study (Karolinska Institute University)

The primary use of case study in this research is to provide rich data about the understanding of the cultural diversity in working places. A case study mainly refers to an approach used in the research as it involves the use of empirical data in the investigation of real strategic evidence that supports the research (Harrison *et al.*, 2017). The study is based on cultural diversity in working places thus it is based on different organisations. Therefore, Karolinska institute University in Sweden was chosen as it represents an international organization consisting of different employees from different parts of the world.

Karolinska Institute (KI)

Karolinska institute (KI) is a well-known institution for its cultural diversity among its employees and the students. This is mainly because it consists of a wide range of professional's staffs, students, faculties, student exchange programs with other medical organization in the world. The institution serves as the only university in Sweden that only deals with medical practices from all parts of the world.

It was founded in 1901 with the primary aim of promoting health stabilities among all people in the world (Boushel *et al.*, 2015). It was a further part of the European Union that aimed in uniting the medical association in a more diverse manner in most parts of the world. It also aims to educate many diverse individuals by diverse cultural setting in the aim of promoting cultural diversity in different organizations. One of the basic requirements in this institution is that all the students are taught in English, which plays an essential role in communication.

One of the relative principle missions in the school's mission is to promote togetherness, cohesiveness in the advancement of the theory of cultural integration in the basis of local, regional, and the international level. Almost 40 percent of the whole population consisting of the students and the professionals come from over 24 different nationalities, which represent a diverse cultural integration (Boushel *et al.*, 2015). The study is therefore limited to the employees mainly and not the students in the aim of answering the research question.

The human resource for the institution also supports the cultural diversity enabling all the individuals to have a well-ratified way of communication and settling any problem that may arise during the working process.

The managers usually contact the HR for any support, which always has equal opportunities to employment cases based on the experience and competence level. In the last, workers reviewed the action plan, the university emphasised the importance of treating all the workers regardless of their cultural origin with respect (Loulousis, Darcy & Copello, 2017). This aimed in the cooperation for the workers and effectiveness of the main objective of the institution. Teamwork was also embraced regarding it as the main tool for better results.

The present research findings in this paper have a lot of similarities with the information obtained in the case study (existing literature). The research findings or results of this paper answered all the research questions

as depicted in the next chapter.

DISCUSSION

This section will cover the main discussion in the aim to answer the main research questions and objectives. This objective mainly aims to determine whether workforce diversity has a positive effect on customers' related issues, determine whether employee value system affect organization performance and establish what organizations are doing to manage diversity. The results will be based on the research done from the Karolinska Institute case study and the questions respondents, which were obtained from the twenty respondents.

From the research study, it is evident that diversity in working places always aims in promoting acceptance, respect and a cohesive working among the workers to promote teamwork despite the escalating gender, race, age, social and political differences among the workers (Thompson, 2017). There exists a list of benefits associated with the work diversity, which this section aims to discuss them thoroughly. However, as cultural diversity become more diverse in much organization, there tends to be a rise of diverse challenges that face the system.

The role of Cultural diversity on organizational performance

Overseeing workforce assorted variety adequately positively affects competitive Advantage. A few researchers who contend that assorted social variety if very much actualized effects the several associations in an ideal way have ostensibly examined this. Eminently, this has likewise been assessed to demonstrate its effects on the associations contemplate. For example, the Karolinska Institute genuine model, which establish a full scope of common assorted varieties from various nations of the world (Thompson, 2017).

As indicated by assorted social variety opens the reasoning and practicability the board of various representatives to have the capacity to do their exercises. Also, it has additionally been noticed that because of expanded information of utilization of various systems by the general population it prepares the representatives to have the capacity to be progressively beneficial. Also, according to Garg, and Ganesh, 2018 to expenses of running organizations and associations are for the most part brought down if a more significant amount of specialisation and division of work is connected.

This is for the most part because, distinctive societies

have distinctive accepts about time and work, along these lines, if an organization has the differing social workforce, such instances of truancy will be decreased (Garg & Ganesh, 2018).

Viable overseen workforce decent variety positively affects deals, which influences the market size of organizations or the association, which consequently builds the benefit, go. This is because work drive decent variety is the minor picture of shopper-assorted variety.

Importance of Cultural Diversity in workplaces

In the aim to determine whether employee value system affect organization performance and establish what organizations are doing to manage diversity, the primary importance of cultural diversity is clearly outlined. Such importance's are clearly explained below:

i) Increase in Productivity

According to Riccucci (2018), work diversity increases the productivity of the different organization. For instance, Karolinska Institute is a global institution in medical training of professional's where it is evident that most of the employees are from other countries. This is mainly because the diverse employees can offer a wide range of solutions to the common problems that may be experienced in workplaces. Such efforts enable the organizations to be able to be more productive.

Diversity in leadership also allows the new leaders to bring new skills to the institution increasing the production speed. Moreover, it also increases the employee's morale, as they can learn more skills in their working places.

ii) Increase in creativity

A diverse working organization also increases the creativity level of the employees at a significant level. This is usually due to the cross-fertilizing of new skills among the employees. According to Greene & Kirton (2015), Ethno Connect which is a specializing company dealing with the consultation of cultural diversity in working places, employees from different backgrounds always provide a critical solution to the problems in the aims of achieving a common goal.

Language Skills

Workplace diversity also increases the language level of the workers thus enabling them to expand to the global market. For institutions to have a broader market range, communication plays a vital role. According to Greene & Kirton (2015), to Bilingual employees, always have a

more comprehensive market level of market increasing their profit range.

iii) Positive reputation

Many of the international workers usually seek to apply for job opportunities from companies that offer different employment. This is mainly because the employees are always assured that in such companies, there is minimal employee discrimination. From the case study and the questionnaire respondents, it was found out cultural diversity have several importance to the employees and the organization at large (Greene & Kirton, 2015).

CONCLUSION

The cultural work diversity consists of importance is which mainly consist of increased adaptability to the success and competitiveness of different organizations. If an organization embraces diversity in the workplaces, the probability of the company to succeed in its activities is always very high. Therefore, the study aimed at providing detailed information concerning the cultural diversity in workplaces and its importance. The main research questions that guided the research were to determine whether workforce diversity has a positive effect on customers' related issues, determining whether employee value system affect organization performance and establishing what organizations are doing to manage diversity.

From the research, the study carried out a case study from Karolinska Institute University in Sweden, which was chosen as it, represents an international organization consisting of different employees from different parts of the world. The research also used questionnaires to investigate more on the cultural diversities. Twenty employees of the Karolinska Institute University were engaged in the study to investigate the impact of cultural diversity. In the questionnaire provided, it required the respondents to specify if they came from Sweden or not. The results showed that out of the twenty employees, 11 of them came from other countries in the world. This showed that the institution consisted of diverse cultural employees.

The study found out that cultural diversity always promotes the positive effects to the customer's related issues. Moreover, it was also evident that the valving system of the organization always affects the organization performance system. The study came up with several recommendations, which may limit the challenges, which are associated with cultural diversity.

RECOMMENDATION

Although the cultural working diversity consists of several importance to a different organization, the HR personnel and the individuals involved in recruitment professionals are supposed to be aware of the existing challenges and the recommendations that are supposed to be taken concerning the issue. The following consist of the recommendations that the research aims to offer to the recruiting and the HR personnel.

i. Diversity training among the employees

The Human Resource management requires creating a comprehensive training method for its workers. This can be administered regularly by setting annual awards to the individual who is noted to be appreciating diversity in the working places.

ii. Widening the recruitment base

Employers should always create a wide employment range of its employees, which will ensure the companies achieve its objectives. Such activities will ensure that all the workers respect other people opinion and their cultural diversity. Moreover, if the employers employ the strategy in the best way, it will be more critical in achieving the customer's issues.

iii. Offer language training

A common language among the workers creates uniformity among the workers. Notably, this enables better expression of the workers to be able to express their difficulties. On most occasions, there are always minimal chances of the workers identifying other people's weaknesses.

iv. Creating an evaluation form

Evaluation always forms a good platform whereby every employee is evaluated similarly. Such equal treatment will improve the diversity of the workers to work to their full means. Moreover, it is always essential for the workers to be able to work to achieve their objective. Therefore, employees should use equal remuneration and the same evaluation method thus promoting diversity from the workers.

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