

Workforce Diversity and *Inter se* Relationships among Employees in Telecom Organizations in India

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Abstract

In organisations, different employees come together to work towards a common goal but if there are any kind of differences which make it difficult for employees to work together, it will hinder the growth of the organisation and make it impossible to achieve the goals effectively. This paper analyzes the relationship between employee diversity and inter se relationships. The study was conducted on a sample of 352 employees from telecom companies (Bharti Airtel and MTNL) in Delhi NCR. The workforce diversity of gender, age, marital status, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and qualifications revealed that it has no effect on the relationships among the diverse employees. But in case of the public organisation the differences in language showed a significant impact on the relationships among the diverse employees.

Keywords- Workforce diversity, *Inter se* relationships, Telecom

Introduction

Globalization has forced the organisations to make their workforce as diversified as is their customer base. To have a diverse workforce is necessary for the development economic growth and satisfactory moral, emotional and intellectual existence of organisations (Lauring, 2009). A diverse workforce can help to satisfactorily cater the needs of the diverse base of customers. If an organisation is not employing people from diverse backgrounds then the organisation is not enough competent (Saha & Patra, 2008).

Workforce diversity in India is increasing rapidly along the lines of gender, ethnicity and age. According to the census 2011, the overall growth rate of workforce in India is 1.8% between 2001 and 2011. India has the largest number of women who are professionally qualified. Many companies in India are making efforts not only to increase female workforce in their organisations but also to increase the representation of women in leadership positions. Some of the major excluded groups in India include women, Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims and persons with disabilities including the disadvantaged groups like transgenders and bonded laborers.

In organisations, different employees come together to work towards a common goal but if there are any kind of differences which make it difficult for employees to work together, it will hinder the growth of the organisation and make it impossible to achieve the goals effectively. The wide demographics of the organisation may affect the communication and cooperation among its employees (Chatman & Flynn, 2001). It is found to be easier to maintain and develop relationships on the basis of common features or common backgrounds (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) compared to those with different characteristics and backgrounds. Organisations need to have a smooth flow of information to work efficiently, and requires better communication among the employees and communication is affected by the type of relationship that the employees share. Diversity effects the communication processes within the teams and organisation and these effects can be positive as well as negative (Bogaert & Vloeberghs, 2005).

Literature Review

Many researchers have found that interactions among people of different races result in the feelings of anxiety and discomfort (Plant & Devine, 2003; Shelton et al., 2005). There can be various reasons why such feelings exist in relationships among people from different races like avoiding to appear prejudiced (Plant & Devine, 1998) the fear of being rejected in encounters of different groups (Tropp, 2003) and lack of experience in communicating with different race groups (Plant & Devine, 2003). If the employees from different backgrounds and with different features are comfortable in communicating with each other it will result in providing a wider range of experiences and ideas (Saxena, 2014). Having good interpersonal relationships among employees is important as it helps in the smooth functioning of the organisation. The patterns of relationships among employees show that the individuals have a positive attitude towards the members of their own group while they have a negative attitude towards individuals of other groups (Tajfel et al. 1971). A negative attitude among team members results in team relationship conflicts. A team relationship conflict is a disagreement caused by incompatibility issues like animosity, tension and annoyance among the team members (Jehn, 1995). It also involves differences in viewpoints, feelings, opinions, ideas and emotions that are not related to the work (Parayitam & Dooley, 2009). Such conflicts show the tension among the relationships between the employees (Edmondson & Smith, 2006). Evidence from research proves that the main effect

of diversity is relationship conflicts (e.g. Mohammed & Angell, 2004). And with the increase in the diverse workforce, an organisation faces increased interpersonal conflicts.

The similarities among the employees in terms of personalities and values affect the interaction among them. It has also been found that immigrants and minorities have poor relationships with their managers (Igbaria & Wormley, 1992). Diversity leads to diminishing group cohesiveness which leads to absenteeism and turnover (Tsui et al., 1992). Ethnic and racial diversity has been found to create emotional conflicts among co-workers (Skerry, 2002). It has been found the gender also affects the relationships among employees and their subordinates. Female employees who have male or female managers get lesser recognition for their opinions as well as lesser opportunities (Callan, 1993). Male subordinates who have female managers, who use a problem-solving approach, are more receptive towards them, but female subordinates with female managers have a negative response towards them irrespective of their managerial style (Watson, 1988).

The workforce diversity is not only about the differences in attitude, perception and languages but also about the differences in knowledge and skills, as sharing knowledge is very important to improve productivity which happens through proper communication (Lauring, 2009). The organisational teams that have moderate levels of diversity which result in more conflicts and communication problems (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000) as compared to those teams that have low or high diversity. Pelled et al. (1997) found that the groups that are more diverse face more conflict and miscommunication. The relationships among *employees* depend on the organisational culture and fair treatment and equality faced by the diverse groups which affect their behavior of supportiveness and working together in teams (Idowu, 2015).

In spite of the growth in the number of scientific attention, there have been a number of conclusions related to the outcomes and the effects on diversity on the organisations. There has been a lack of consistent results related to the relationships among the diverse workforce.

Objective

- To study the effect of workforce diversity on inter-se relationship of employees.

Research Methodology

This paper aimed at evaluating the workforce diversity of private and public telecom sector i.e. Bharti Airtel and MTNL in Delhi NCR from the perspective of lower and middle level employees. Cluster sampling followed by simple random sampling was used for the selection of telecom companies from the five regions of Delhi NCR (Delhi, Gurgaon, Faridabad, Noida and Ghaziabad). Field survey method was adopted for the collection of data, for which a comprehensive structured questionnaire was used. The sample size for the study was chosen according to the items (itemized sampling) in the study. The final sample was taken as 352 from both the organisations.

Data Analysis

H₀₁: Employee diversity does not affect the *inter se* relationship among workforce.

To test the above hypothesis independent samples t test and one way anova were applied on various dimensions of diversity. Independent samples t test was used for gender and marital status with *Inter se* relationships (table 1) and One way anova was applied on age, religion, education, ethnicity, experience, language and tenure (table 2). In public organisation i.e. MTNL the dimensions of diversity which are gender, marital status, age, education, religion, experience, ethnicity and tenure were found to have an effect on the *inter se* relationships of employees as the p value was found to be higher than 0.05 but in case of language diversity in the public organisation it was found to have a significant effect on the *inter se* relationships of employees ($p < 0.05$).

Table 1 : Independent Samples Test- <i>Inter se</i> relationships									
			Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
			F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Gender	Public	Equal variances assumed	.563	.454	-1.919	189	.056	-.10010	.05215
	Private	Equal variances assumed	1.135	.288	1.344	189	.181	.05832	.04340
Marital Status	Public	Equal variances assumed	.742	.390	-.404	189	.687	-.02200	.05443
	Private	Equal variances assumed	.281	.597	-1.846	189	.066	-.07571	.04101

Thus the linguistic diversity of employees working in the public organisation can have an impact on the *inter se* relationships of the employees. The diversity of language can be a cause of strained relationships among employees (Vallaster, 2005).

			Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Age	Public	Between Groups	.383	4	.096	.800	.527
		Within Groups	22.253	186	.120		
		Total	22.636	190			
	Private	Between Groups	.410	3	.137	1.812	.147
		Within Groups	14.108	187	.075		
		Total	14.518	190			
Ethnicity	Public	Between Groups	.547	2	.274	2.328	.100
		Within Groups	22.089	188	.117		
		Total	22.636	190			
	Private	Between Groups	.060	2	.030	.392	.676
		Within Groups	14.458	188	.077		
		Total	14.518	190			
Religion	Public	Between Groups	.386	3	.129	1.081	.358
		Within Groups	22.250	187	.119		
		Total	22.636	190			
	Private	Between Groups	.349	4	.087	1.144	.337
		Within Groups	14.169	186	.076		
		Total	14.518	190			
Education	Public	Between Groups	.325	2	.162	1.368	.257
		Within Groups	22.311	188	.119		
		Total	22.636	190			
	Private	Between Groups	.250	2	.125	1.647	.195
		Within Groups	14.268	188	.076		
		Total	14.518	190			
Experience	Public	Between Groups	.546	6	.091	.758	.604
		Within Groups	22.090	184	.120		
		Total	22.636	190			
	Private	Between Groups	.246	3	.082	1.076	.361
		Within Groups	14.272	187	.076		
		Total	14.518	190			
Language	Public	Between Groups	.938	3	.313	2.694	.047
		Within Groups	21.698	187	.116		

		Total	22.636	190			
	Private	Between Groups	.173	3	.058	.753	.522
		Within Groups	14.345	187	.077		
		Total	14.518	190			
Tenure	Public	Between Groups	.607	6	.101	.845	.536
		Within Groups	22.028	184	.120		
		Total	22.636	190			
	Private	Between Groups	.078	2	.039	.510	.601
		Within Groups	14.440	188	.077		
		Total	14.518	190			

While in case of private organisation i.e. Airtel all the studied dimension of diversity which are gender, marital status, age, ethnicity, religion, education, experience, tenure and language were found to have no influence on the *inter se* relationships of employees ($p>0.05$). Thus failing to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 3-Hypotheses results-Inter se relationships & Workforce Diversity		
Hypotheses	Public	Private
H_{01} : Employee diversity does not affect the inter-se relationship among workforce.		
$H_{01.1}$: Inter-se relationship is independent of diversity of gender.	Supported	Supported
$H_{01.2}$: Inter-se relationships are independent of diversity of marital status.	Supported	Supported
$H_{01.3}$: Inter-se relationships are independent of age diversity.	Supported	Supported
$H_{01.4}$: Inter-se relationships are independent of diversity of ethnicity.	Supported	Supported
$H_{01.5}$: Inter-se relationships are independent of diversity of religion.	Supported	Supported
$H_{01.6}$: Inter-se relationships are independent of diversity of education.	Supported	Supported
$H_{01.7}$: Inter-se relationships are independent of diversity of experience.	Supported	Supported
$H_{01.8}$: Inter-se relationships are independent of diversity of language.	Not Supported	Supported
$H_{01.9}$: Inter-se relationships are independent of diversity of tenure.	Supported	Supported

The workforce diversity of gender, age, marital status, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and qualifications revealed that it has no effect on the relationships among the diverse employees. But in case of the public organisation the differences in language showed a significant impact on the relationships among the diverse employees.

Conclusion

In the present scenario of the Indian organisations diversity of the workforce is an aspect which can neither be avoided nor underestimated. It holds an important place as it is growing each and every day whether it is in terms of gender, age, religion or any other dimension. The objective of the research was to reveal how a diverse workforce is related to the working environment of the organisations which involved their interpersonal relationships. Having a diverse workforce was also not found to have any significant impact on the interpersonal relationships of the employees in both public and private organisation which is very important for the organisations in order to have a clear communication among the employees which leads to the smoother functioning of the organisations. Language diversity in case of the public organisation was found to have an impact on the interpersonal relationships of employees which is a hindrance in the effective functioning of the organisation. Language diversity can lead to misunderstanding among the employees at the workplaces. Although organisations have a common corporate language but training employees in order to remove the mother tongue influence is very important as to reduce the differences and misunderstandings, as the use of a common language does not guarantee a homogenous communication.

Suggestions

There should also be training for having a homogenous corporate language so as to remove the language barriers. Soft skills training, language training cross cultural training etc. could be used to reduce the negative impacts of language diversity. Organisations should have a separate diversity management teams in order to manage, make strategies, policies and also provide proper training to the employees for the acceptance of diverse employees in the organisations. So that there is a proper focus on, not only having a diverse workforce but also using it for effective outcomes from them.

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