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Impact of Workplace Diversity in Nepalese Organizations

Rabina Khatri*

Abstract

This study examines the impact of workplace diversity in Nepalese organizations. Organizational performance is selected as the dependent variable. Similarly, age diversity, gender diversity, ethnic diversity, educational background diversity and marital status diversity are selected as the independent variables. This study is based on primary data with 123 observations. To achieve the purpose of the study, structured questionnaire is prepared. The correlation coefficients and regression models are estimated to test the significance and importance of different factors influencing workplace diversity in Nepalese organizations.

The study showed that that age diversity has a positive impact on organizational performance. It means that increase in age diversity in organization leads to increase in organizational performance. Similarly, gender diversity has a positive impact on organizational performance. It means that increase in gender diversity in an organization leads to increase in organizational performance. Moreover, ethnic diversity has a positive impact on organizational performance. It means increase in ethnic diversity in an organization leads to increase in organizational performance. Likewise, marital status diversity has a positive impact on organizational performance. It means that increase in marital status diversity in an organization leads to increase in organizational performance. Further, educational background diversity has a positive impact on organizational performance. It implies that increase in educational background diversity in an organization leads to increase in organizational performance.

Keywords: age diversity, gender diversity, ethnic diversity, educational background diversity, marital status diversity, organizational performance.

1. Introduction

Diversity in the workplace refers to the acceptance and integration of people of different social backgrounds, cultures, abilities, and life experiences into a company (Maqsoom *et al.*, 2023). Workplace Diversity is a process intended to create and maintain a positive work environment where the similarities and differences of individuals are valued, so that all can reach their potential and maximize their contributions to an organization's strategic

* Ms. Khatri is a Freelance Researcher, Kathmandu, Nepal.

goals and objectives (Patrick *et al.*, 2012). According to Kreitner and Kinichi (2004), workplace diversity refers to the wide range of individual variances and similarities that exist among the people employed by a business. Workplace diversity includes the collective mixture of differences and similarities of the workers. Dealing with workplace diversity requires managers to integrate the collective differences and similarities.

Dahm (2003) stated diversity within an organization could evoke an array of emotions. The workplace is more diverse regarding gender, age, ethnicity including the general population who are distinctive and display diverse states of mind, practices, needs, norms, traditions, standards and values on workplace as noted by (Wong, 2001). Furthermore, Wiersema and Bantel (1992) found that the members of a work group with different demographic backgrounds have dissimilar belief structures. Thus, diversity studies would then be reduced to the conclusion that everyone is different and, if this conclusion is accepted, the concept of diversity may become nothing more than a benign, meaningless concept (Nkomo, 1995). Likewise, Ogbo *et al.* (2014) determined whether workplace diversity has an influence on customer related issues. The study revealed that workplace diversity has a positive effect on customer related issues in an organization.

Darwin and Palanisamy (2015) showed that age, gender and ethnic diversity have no significant impact the performance of employees. Workplace diversity brings about an increase in the amount of information and perspective available during group discussion, which in turn, may facilitate group decisions making and improve performance. Likewise, Arokiasany (2013) observed that many organizations prefer to hire more of the male workers than the female workers because they are of the opinion that male workers have the ability to perform their jobs and can manage their jobs well. However, Erhardt *et al.* (2003) examined the relationship between demographic diversity on boards of directors with firm financial performance of 127 large US companies. The study indicated that board diversity is positively associated with the financial indicators of firm performance. Furthermore, Carter *et al.* (2003) revealed that presence of female directors on the board is positively related to firm performance.

From an organizational perspective, workplace diversity gave rise to mixing and pooling of different experiences and perspectives and therefore triggers innovation, creativity, and profitability for the organization (Obamiro *et al.*, 2019). However, opinions on diversity matters differ, and the optimism

regarding diversity's mending of inequalities and promotion of innovation and profitability is challenged by insights from long-standing research on organizational demography, which points out that organizational diversity often diminishes group cohesiveness and even leads to conflict and hostility among co-workers from different categories and hence low job-satisfaction (Jain and Kaur, 2014). Organizational performance comprises the actual output or results of an organization as measured against its intended outputs. Although the concept of organizational performance is very common in academic literature, its definition is not yet a universally accepted concept (Gavrea *et al.*, 2011). The definition of organizational performance is a surprisingly open question with few studies using consistent definitions and measures (Kirby, 2005). Moreover, Richard *et al.* (2007) found organizational performance as encompassing three specific areas of firm outcomes i.e., financial performance (profits, return on assets, return on investment, etc.), product market performance (sales, market share, etc.) and shareholder return (total shareholder return, economic value added, etc.)

Gould-Williams (2003) explained organizational performance as the extent to which the organization is fulfilling the promises it has made to its shareholders. Moreover, Kreitner and Kinichi (2004) observed that managing workplace diversity is very important in harmonizing the differences and similarities of workers so that the organization and the individuals within them can achieve their goals and objectives. However, Dressler (2006) observed that managing workplace diversity means minimizing diversity's potential barriers such as prejudices and bias that can undermine the functioning of a diverse workplace. Furthermore, Daft (2000) analysed organizational theory and design. The study showed that organizational performance as the organization's ability to attain its goals by using resources in an efficient and effective manner; effectiveness being the degree to which the organization achieves a stated goal, and efficiency being the number of resources used to achieve an organizational goal.

Kreitner (2001), defined diversity as differences among the people with respect to age, education background, class, race, ethnicity, gender, disabilities, marital status etc. Likewise, Milliken and Martins (1996) stated 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. It can be understood that differences in terms of ethnicity or religion only is not diversity, but it is the combination of all differences (Saxena, 2009). Moreover, Barak (2016) stated that the

demographic trends in developed and developing countries like aging workplace, growing representation of women and minorities in the workplace, and the rising number of young people in developing countries has altered homogeneous work settings of the recent past. However, Ali *et al.* (2011) showed that the substantial growth of gender diversity has a positive effect on organizational performance. Furthermore, Childs (2005) investigated the relationship between workplace diversity management and performance of commercial banks in Kenya. The study found that gender diversity, age diversity, ethnicity diversity and educational background diversity constant have statistically significant relationship with performance of commercial banks.

Alder (1986) examined the effect of workplace diversity towards employee performance in a banking industry of Pakistan. The results showed that there is a significant impact on employee performance when different workplace is working in the banking industry. Arokiasany (2013) observed that many organizations prefer to hire more of the male workers than the female workers because they are of the opinion that male workers have the ability to perform their jobs and can manage their jobs well. However, Kundu *et al.* (2017) found that employees irrespective of their diversity backgrounds positively acknowledged diversity and diversity management. Similarly, management of diversity incorporates utilizing the cultural contrasts as a part of aptitudes of individuals, thoughts and inventiveness to add to a typical goal and undertaking it in a manner that gives the organization a competitive edge over other organizations (Morrison, 1992).

Schwepker (2001) assessed the perceptions of diverse workplace and commitment on enhancing organizational performance. The study found perceptions of committed work environment along with diverse workplace are equally important to enhance organizational performance because it is related to psychosomatic through which diverse but committed work environment brings change in the organizational performance. Frink *et al.* (2003) found that the more balanced gender composition is associated with higher organization performance than is proportional dominance by either gender. Bhatti *et al.* (2007) stated that increasing employee's participation has positive effect on employee job satisfaction, employee's commitment and employee's productivity.

In the context of Nepal, Regmi (2009) investigated employees from unequal treatment due to their gender or ethnic origin. The study revealed

workers' perceptions of discrimination were positively associated with increased stress, intentions to seek new employment positions, and decreased satisfaction, commitment and citizenship behaviors. Gautam (2004) showed that employee was more satisfied with the second-generation joint venture banks where employee and customer has to spend less time waiting and also where the employee's behavior was good. Likewise, Khadka *et al.* (2018) revealed that affirmative action policies adopted by the government and other non-state actors for the recruitment of staff have enhanced the representation of women in the workplace. Similarly, Gupta *et al.* (2019) examined the impact of workplace diversity on employee performance. The study revealed that perceived diversity and performance are significantly positively associated.

The above discussion shows that empirical evidences vary greatly across the studies on the impact of workplace diversity in organizations. Though there are above mentioned empirical evidences in the context of other countries and in Nepal, no such findings using more recent data exist in the context of Nepal. Therefore, in order to support one view or the other, this study has been conducted.

The main purpose of the study is to analyze the impact of workplace diversity in Nepalese organizations. Specifically, it examines the effect of age diversity, gender diversity, ethnicity diversity, marital status diversity and educational background diversity with organizational performance in Nepalese organizations.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows. Section two describes the sample, data and methodology. Section three presents the empirical results and the final section draws the conclusion.

2. Methodological aspects

The study is based on the primary data. The data were gathered from 123 respondents through questionnaire. The respondents' views were collected on age diversity, gender diversity, ethnicity diversity, marital status diversity, educational background diversity and organizational performance. The study used descriptive and casual comparative research design.

The model

The model estimated in this study assumes that organizational performance depends on workplace diversity. The dependent variables selected for the study is organizational performance. Similarly, the selected independent variables are age diversity, gender diversity, ethnic diversity,

educational background diversity and marital status diversity. Therefore, the model takes the following form:

$$OP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 AGE + \beta_2 GEN + \beta_3 ETH + \beta_4 MRS + \beta_5 EDU +$$

Where,

OP=Organizational performance

AGE=Age diversity

GEN=Gender diversity

ETH=Ethnic diversity

MRS=Marital status diversity

EDU=Educational background diversity

Age diversity was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “Training and career development opportunity in organization has improved performance of employees of every age”, “To enhance organizational performance, my leader involves all team members of various age groups in issue solving and decision-making” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.478$).

Gender diversity was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “Gender diversity helps to improve team performance in my organization.”, “My organization recruits’ employees of different gender” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.559$).

Ethnic diversity was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “My organization hires people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.”, “Employees from different ethnic backgrounds participate in decision-making at my organization in order to generate better ideas”, and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.537$).

Marital status diversity was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for

strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “My organization has a workplace of diverse marital status”, “All employees are treated equally, irrespective of their marital status”, and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.540$).

Educational background diversity was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “My company selects new employees based on their educational background”, “In terms of educational backgrounds, my organization treats everyone equally”, and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.562$).

Organizational performance was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “The performance of an organization can be enhanced by gender equality”, “I believe diversity in organization increases productivity”, and so on. The reliability of the feature was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.612$).

The following section describes the independent variables used in this study along with hypothesis formulation.

Age diversity

According to Inmyxai and Takahashi (2012), different age groups provide different values for companies and these values can complement each other which improve companies’ performance. Gellner *et al.* (2009) revealed that an increase in age diversity can have substantial positive productivity effects, particularly in innovative and creative companies. Furthermore, Gong *et al.* (2021) revealed that age diversity is positively associated with organizational performance through the mediation of increased human and social capital. Additionally, Gupta *et al.* (2013) revealed that there is a significant positive relationship found between age diversity and organizational performance. Similarly, Li *et al.* (2021) revealed that age heterogeneity has a positive impact on employee productivity. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H₁: There is a positive relationship between age diversity and organizational performance.

Gender diversity

Nevertheless, gender diversity may help improve a firm's ability to make decisions that improve its financial performance because the consideration of multiple perspectives, along with enhanced deliberativeness, tends to improve decision quality (Loyd *et al.*, 2013). Likewise, Mousa (2021) revealed relationship between gender diversity and organizational inclusion, and the authors confirmed that gender diversity, diversity management, and organizational inclusion can effectively predict workplace happiness. Furthermore, Ginkel and Knippenberg (2008) documented that female board representation is positively related to firm financial performance. For the sustainable growth of any organization, gender diversity is considered very important. Significant benefits like low capital cost, access to external finance and better firm performance are associated with high ethics of gender diversity in Banks (Richard *et al.*, 2013). Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H₂: There is a positive relationship between gender diversity and organizational performance.

Ethnic diversity

Arokiasamy (2013) asserted that if ethnic diversity is not managed, communication problems and interpersonal conflicts may occur. Similarly, Pitts and Jarry (2007) examined the effects of the ethnic diversity of managers and street level public officials on work-related outcomes. The study found a positive impact of ethnic diversity of managers on the work-related outcomes and organizational performance. Furthermore, Bleaney and Dimico (2016) found that ethnic-based conflicts may hurt an organization's performance, reputation, and financial success. However, Van Knippenberg *et al.* (2013) stated that ethnic diversity among employees in a firm fosters superior problem-solving approaches, creativity, and innovation. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H₃: There is a positive relationship between ethnic diversity and organizational performance.

Marital status diversity

Choi (2007) reported that marital status diversity contributes to synergistic success when members of organizations can understand and respect each other and draw on the experiences, skills, and perspectives of each other. Similarly, Kenny (1983) argued that the marriage premium

is partly a return on the higher human capital investment that married men make by working longer hours and gaining more work experience. Likewise, organizations that view marital status diversity as part of their main strategy will profit much more than the organization that does not profit from cost savings in turnover and improved sales (Brown and Lam, 2008). To enhance the employee performance and increase organizational productivity, many companies, including banks, are now focused on managing workplace diversity such as age, marital status and ethnic diversity (Khan *et al.*, 2019). Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H₄: There is a positive relationship between marital status diversity and organizational performance.

Educational background diversity

According to Nkiru *et al.* (2019), evaluated the effect of education diversity on the employees' innovativeness of manufacturing entities in Nigeria. The finding revealed that education diversity has a positive effect on innovativeness of selected manufacturing entities in Nigeria. Likewise, Elsaid (2012) found that an organization is more likely to be creative and inventive if its membership is made up of a diverse range of educational backgrounds. Similarly, Gupta *et al.* (2015) found that top management teams' attitudes toward a company's global, strategic positioning were favorably correlated with their experience abroad and diverse educational backgrounds. However, Magoshi and Chang (2009) examined the diversity management and its effects on employee's organizational commitment in the context of Japan and Korea. The study concluded that various levels and types of education might expect different mobility rates. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H₅: There is a positive relationship between education background diversity and organizational performance.

3. Results and discussion

Correlation analysis

On analysis of data, correlation analysis has been undertaken first and for this purpose, Kendall's Tau correlation coefficients along with means and standard deviations have been computed, and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Kendall's Tau correlation coefficients matrix

This table presents Kendall's Tau coefficients between dependent and independent variables. The correlation coefficients are based on 123 observations. The dependent variable is OP (Organizational Performance). The independent variables are AGE (Age Diversity), GEN (Gender Diversity), ETH (Ethnic Diversity), MRS (Marital Status Diversity) and EDU (Educational Background Diversity).

Variable	mean	S. D	OP	AGE	GEN	ETH	MRS	EDU
OP	3.951	0.723	1					
AGE	4.004	0.656	0.582**	1				
GEN	3.931	0.704	0.583**	0.670**	1			
ETH	3.936	0.702	0.547**	0.622**	0.639**	1		
MRS	3.840	0.719	0.506**	0.564**	0.524**	0.561**	1	
EDU	3.863	0.735	0.539**	0.534**	0.542**	0.544**	0.498**	1

Note: The asterisk signs (**) and (*) indicate that the results are significant at one percent and five percent levels respectively.

Table 1 shows the Kendall's Tau correlation coefficients of dependent and independent variables. The study shows that age diversity is positively correlated to organizational performance. It implies that increase in age diversity in organization leads to increase in organizational performance. The result also reveals that the gender diversity is positively correlated to organizational performance. It implies that increase in gender diversity in an organization leads to increase in organizational performance. Likewise, ethnic diversity is also positively correlated to organizational performance. It means increase in ethnic diversity in an organization leads to increase in organizational performance. Moreover, marital status diversity is positively correlated to organizational performance. It shows that increase in marital status diversity in an organization leads to increase in organizational performance. In addition, educational background diversity is positively correlated to organizational performance. It implies that increase in educational background diversity in an organization leads to increase in organizational performance.

Regression analysis

Having indicated the Kendall's Tau correlation coefficients, the regression analysis has been carried out and the results are presented in Table 2. More specifically, it presents the regression results of, age diversity, gender diversity, ethnic diversity, marital status diversity and educational background diversity on organizational performance in Nepalese organizations.

Table 2

Estimated regression results of age diversity, gender diversity, ethnic diversity, marital status diversity and educational background diversity on organizational performance in Nepalese organizations

The results are based on 123 observations using linear regression model. The model is $OP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 AGE + \beta_2 GEN + \beta_3 ETH + \beta_4 MRS + \beta_5 EDU + \epsilon_i$ where the dependent variable is OP (Organizational Performance). The independent variables are AGE (Age Diversity), GEN (Gender Diversity), ETH (Ethnic Diversity), MRS (Marital Status Diversity) and EDU (Educational Background Diversity).

Model	Intercept	Regression coefficients of					Adj. R_bar ²	SEE	F-value
		AGE	GEN	ETH	MRS	EDU			
1	0.845 (2.931) **	0.776 (10.910) **					0.492	0.51550	119.033
2	1.080 (4.120) **		0.730 (11.119) **				0.501	0.51063	123.632
3	1.253 (4.487) **			0.686 (9.818) **			0.439	0.54167	96.402
4	1.435 (5.304) **				0.655 (9.462) **		0.421	0.55044	89.530
5	1.375 (5.320) **					0.667 (10.149) **	0.455	0.53363	103.005
6	0.791 (3.046) **		0.475 (5.208) **			0.335 (3.837) **	0.552	0.48393	76.187
7	0.697 (2.510) **	0.403 (3.297) **	0.417 (3.657) **				0.539	0.49100	72.292
8	0.611 (2.208) **	0.494 (5.190) **				0.352 (4.138) **	0.552	0.48429	76.012
9	0.991 (3.560) **			0.415 (3.992) **	0.346 (3.411) **		0.484	0.51933	58.256
10	0.889 (3.282) **			0.380 (4.068) **		0.406 (4.549) **	0.517	0.50232	66.396

Notes:

- i. Figures in parentheses are t-values.
- ii. The asterisk signs (**) and (*) indicate that results are significant at one percent and five percent level of significance respectively.
- iii. Organizational performance is dependent variable.

Table 2 shows that the beta coefficients for age diversity are positive with organizational performance. It indicates that age diversity has a positive impact on organizational performance. This finding is consistent with the findings of Gupta *et al.* (2021). Likewise, the result also shows that the beta coefficients for gender diversity are positive with organizational performance. It reveals that gender diversity has a positive impact on organizational performance. This finding is similar to the findings of Van Ginkel and Van Knippenberg (2008). Similarly, the beta coefficients for ethnic diversity are positive with organizational performance. It indicates that there is a positive impact of ethnic diversity on organizational performance. This finding is consistent with the findings of Arokiasamy (2013). Likewise, the result also

shows that the beta coefficients for marital status diversity are positive with organizational performance. It reveals that marital status has a positive impact on organizational performance. This finding is similar to the findings of Brown and Lam (2008). Similarly, the beta coefficients for educational background diversity are positive with organizational performance. It indicates that there is a positive impact of educational background diversity on organizational performance. This finding is consistent with the findings of Elsaid (2012).

4. Summary and conclusion

A diverse workplace allows for more ideas and processes. This diversity of talent means a broader range of skills among employees, as well as a diversity of experiences and perspectives which increases the potential for increased organizational performance. With a diverse team, a company is able to come up with more creative ideas, and also have a large pool of talent. These factors age diversity, gender diversity, ethnic diversity, marital status diversity and educational background diversity help in improving the performance of the team overall, and as a result, the performance of the organization.

This study attempts to examine the relationship between workplace diversity and organizational performance. The study is based on primary data with 123 observations.

The study also showed that age diversity, gender diversity, ethnic diversity, educational background diversity and marital status diversity has positive relationship with organizational performance. The study concluded that age diversity, gender diversity, ethnic diversity, educational background diversity and marital status diversity have a significant role in increasing organizational performance. The study also concluded that the most influencing factor gender diversity followed by age diversity and educational background diversity that explains the organizational performance.

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