

# Managing Workplace Diversity: Issues and Challenges

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## Abstract

Diversity management is a process intended to create and maintain a positive work environment where the similarities and differences of individuals are valued. The literature on diversity management has mostly emphasized on organization culture; its impact on diversity openness; human resource management practices; institutional environments and organizational contexts to diversity-related pressures, expectations, requirements, and incentives; perceived practices and organizational outcomes related to managing employee diversity; and several other issues. The current study examines the potential barriers to workplace diversity and suggests strategies to enhance workplace diversity and inclusiveness. It is based on a survey of 300 IT employees. The study concludes that successfully managing diversity can lead to more committed, better satisfied, better performing employees and potentially better financial performance for an organization.

## Keywords

diversity management, workplace diversity, discrimination, stereotype, inclusiveness

## Introduction

The concept of diversity includes acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and fostering environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.

Diversity is a set of conscious practices that involve understanding and appreciating interdependence of humanity, cultures, and the natural environment; practicing mutual respect for qualities and experiences that are different from our own; understanding that diversity includes not only ways of being but also ways of knowing; recognizing that personal, cultural, and institutionalized discrimination creates and sustains privileges for some while creating and sustaining disadvantages for others; and building alliances across differences so that we can work together to eradicate all forms of discrimination.

Workplace diversity refers to the variety of differences between people in an organization. That sounds simple, but diversity encompasses race, gender, ethnic group, age, personality, cognitive style, tenure, organizational function, education, background, and more. Diversity involves not only how people perceive themselves but also how they perceive others. Those perceptions affect their interactions. For a wide

assortment of employees to function effectively as an organization, human resource professionals need to deal effectively with issues such as communication, adaptability, and change.

Diversity management 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 goals and objectives.

## Diversity in Relation to Culture and Performance

As the importance of diversity in the organizational context has increased manifold, most organizations would like to research on diversity–organizational culture linkage, its effect on diversity openness, and between diversity and performance both at individual and organizational levels. Patrick (2010) found that diversity determines not only the effects of the diversity within an organization but also the level of openness to dissimilarity characteristics among the organization's members, work groups, and culture. Despite the technological wonders of today's communication, international relations require us to deal with one another on a

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person-to-person basis. For this to be effective, one has to overcome language and stereotype barriers. This may require the mental elimination of terms like *alien* and view the individual as having a background that is different (Moran, Harris, & Moran, 2011). Simlin (2006) found that as the age increases, the perception of diversity openness decreases, and hence it is important to orient the older employees also about the presence and need of diversity openness in organizations through training, workshops, group discussions, and so on. To create opportunities for collaboration, global leaders must not only learn the customs, courtesies, and business protocols of their counterparts from other countries but must also understand the national character, management philosophies, and mind-sets of the people (Hofstede, 1994).

Researchers have suggested that diversity has enhanced performance by broadening the group's perspectives. There is a strong empirical confirmation that successful diversity management and a resulting improvement in organizational performance are positively correlated (Ozbilgin and Tatli, 2008). However, there is a consistent finding that differences should be sought in moderation. Group members' ability to elaborate diverse information may also develop over time as members become more familiar with each others' perspectives and develop transactive memory. This suggests that, especially for diverse work groups, it is important that they can reach more extended tenure, and that they are allowed a more extended start-up phase than more homogeneous groups (Knippenberg, de Dreu, & Homan, 2004). In multidisciplinary teams, in the oil and gas industry, expertise levels of performance diversity were most strongly associated with team performance at moderate levels of diversity (Van Der Vegt & Bunderson, 2005).

### **Diversity: Affirmative Action and Creativity**

Empirical research supports the notion that diversity management can have a positive spillover effect in the workplace. Research by Gilbert, Stead, and Ivancevich (1999) found that women who were hired in organizations that valued diversity were found to be qualified for the job that they held; however, the affirmative action label stigmatized women regardless of job type.

The creativity of teams that were homogeneous on a series of attitude measures was compared against teams with heterogeneous attitudes. Problem solution creativity was judged on originality and practicality. Results indicated that as long as the team members had similar ability levels, the heterogeneous teams were more creative than the homogeneous ones (Cox & Blake, 1991).

### **New Perspectives and Strategies in Managing Diversity**

There are two structural principles that form the foundation for network perspectives. One principle focuses on dense

patterns of local interaction as the basis for coordination and collective action. The other principle focuses on the bridges across global divisions as the basis for information transfer and learning. Moreover, both principles capture important elements of what it takes for a task group to achieve success in reaching its goals. A team that does not develop the connections among their members, which enable it to coordinate effectively, faces an uphill battle. However, when such networks remain concentrated among homogeneous sets of individuals, the team fails to generate the learning that can only come from interaction among different individuals (Reagans & Zuckerman, 2001).

The biggest driver for higher level diversity strategy is the need to tap the creative, cultural, and communicative skills of a variety of employees and to use those skills to improve company policies, products, and customer experiences. Diversity executives cite the importance of having an open mind because the job requires them to come out of their comfort zone and experience things that they may not be familiar with or drawn to (Rodriguez, 2006).

### **Need and Rationale of the Study**

Organizations in India are global today, especially in the IT sector. This has led to an increase in the heterogeneousness among employees and has increased the challenge of organizations to manage diverse employees. Incorporating diverse people and their perspectives has become a major concern for every organization. The repercussions for not managing diversity would lead to lack of skills, competencies, and interests in employees, which will ultimately increase employee turnover and reduce individuals' and organizations' performance to a great extent. Organizations that manage diversity are recipients of more commitment, and better satisfied as well as better performing employees.

Diversity management intends 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 goals and objectives. Diversity management ensures that all employees have the opportunity to maximize their potential and enhance their self-development and their contribution to the organization. It recognizes that people from different backgrounds can bring fresh ideas and perceptions, which can make the way work is done more efficient and make products and services better. Managing diversity successfully will help organizations to nurture creativity and innovation and thereby to tap hidden capacity for growth and improved competitiveness.

Past research work has focused on national culture and its impact on organizational culture. This study has been undertaken to find out the attitudes of employees toward diversity at the workplace. This would enable organizations to formulate diversity programs that incorporate the diverse-ness of each individual, which in turn would induce more

commitment and productivity in their respective roles. The study has also identified the most frequently encountered barriers toward accepting workplace diversity. Some of the strategies to increase inclusiveness and awareness about workplace diversity in IT organizations have also been identified in the study.

Diversity will increase significantly in the coming years, and successful organizations recognize the need for immediate action and are ready and willing to spend resources on managing diversity in the workplace now. It is in this context that the present study was conducted to explore the diversity dimension in the Indian context.

### Objectives of the Study

- To map the attitudes to workplace diversity in the IT context
- To find the most important strategies adopted to enhance workplace diversity
- To identify most frequently encountered barriers for accepting workplace diversity
- To identify strategies to increase inclusiveness
- To find out ways to increase awareness about workplace diversity

### Sample and Sampling Technique

The units selected for the study consisted of employees in IT organizations. Convenience sampling technique was adopted to select the sample respondents. The sample was drawn from the top 15 IT companies in India. To achieve some degree of representativeness, a moderately large sample size of 350 was selected, and respondents with diverse backgrounds were included. The questionnaires were administered to employees with 2 years' experience in that organization to ensure that they are fairly aware about diversity practices in their organizations. The questionnaire was sent to the 350 respondents, of which only 310 questionnaires were returned, comprising a response rate of 88.57%. Furthermore, 10 responses were eliminated due to excessive missing data, and the final sample size for the study was 300 (an effective response rate of 85.71%).

### Tools Adopted for the Study

A questionnaire was developed by the researchers based on the objectives of the study. The reliability of the scales was tested using Cronbach's alpha and is reported in description of tools. Construct validity was ensured by selecting statements from the works of Al-Lamki (2002) and Johnson (2003). Content validity of the statements was established by thorough review by a panel of 10 HR professionals from IT organizations, 5 diversity training experts, and 7 organizational behavior professors.

The questionnaire was divided into six sections:

*Section I*—Information regarding the respondent profile, particularly gender and age group.

*Section II*—Information pertaining to *employees' attitude toward workplace diversity*; respondents were classified as "diversity optimists," "diversity realists," or "diversity pessimists" based on their positive and/or negative orientation toward terms related to workplace diversity.

*Section III*—Items pertaining to strategies for enhancing workplace diversity, using a ranking scale:

- Improving corporate culture by unleashing creativity and performance
- Giving new employees an opportunity to work in an area where they can expect to advance
- Improving relationship with clients
- Increasing employee morale, productivity, and retention
- Decreasing employee complaints and litigation

*Section IV*—Items pertaining to barriers for accepting workplace diversity, using a ranking scale:

- *Prejudice*: an unfair and unreasonable opinion or feeling, especially when formed without enough thought or knowledge; an unjustified negative attitude toward a person based on his or her membership in a particular group
- *Ethnocentrism*: a tendency to regard one's own group, culture, or nation as superior to others
- *Stereotypes*: a fixed idea about what a particular type of person is like, especially an idea that is wrong; a set of beliefs about a group that is applied universally to all members of that group
- *Blaming the victim*: making incorrect casual attributions linking aggressions with perceived characteristics of groups
- *Discrimination*: barring an individual from membership in an organization or from a job because of his or her membership of a particular group
- *Harassment*: consciously shunning verbally or physically abusing an individual because of membership in a particular group
- *Backlash*: negative reaction to members of previously underrepresented groups gaining power and influence

*Section V*—Items pertaining to *strategies to increase awareness about workplace diversity*, using a 5-point rating scale, with 1 = *not at all*, 2 = *to a slight extent*, 3 = *to a moderate extent*, 4 = *to a great extent*, and 5 = *to a very great extent* (with Cronbach's reliability value of .822):

- a. By reducing prejudices and use of stereotypes
  - Recognizing that diversity exists and learning to value and respect fundamental differences
  - Admitting to one's own biases and prejudices and committing to reduce them
  - Dismissing myths about diverse others when in a group of friends or associates
- b. By minimizing miscommunication with diverse others
  - Educating oneself about differences by reading, listening, and broadening one's experience base about diverse people
  - Communicating effectively by listening attentively and asking questions about what one did not understand
  - Avoiding terms that spotlight certain groups and imply the individual is an exception
  - Avoiding valuing one's message based on dress, mannerisms, accent, or eye contact
- c. By building relationships with diverse others
  - Forming positive relationship with diverse others
  - Seeking feedback from diverse others about how well one is communicating respect for them and valuing their diversity
  - Treating diverse others as invited guests by showing interest in them rather than treating them as strangers

*Section VI*—Items pertaining to *strategies* to increase inclusiveness, using a 5-point rating scale, with 1 = *not at all*, 2 = *to a slight extent*, 3 = *to a moderate extent*, 4 = *to a great extent*, and 5 = *to a very great extent* (with Cronbach's reliability value of .861):

- a. Individual strategies to increase inclusiveness
  - By accepting overseas assignment whenever given an opportunity
  - By adapting to customs of the new country and getting to know the local residents, while on an overseas assignment
  - By learning other languages
  - By learning about cultural difference and the way business is conducted in the country where the overseas assignment is
- b. Organizational strategies to increase inclusiveness
  - By offering language training to employees
  - By encouraging employees to accept overseas assignments

- By providing transition counseling to employees and their families both before and after an overseas assignment
- By training employees to learn about and be sensitive to cross-cultural differences
- By examining employee practices to ensure that the organization is not intentionally or unintentionally discriminating against anyone to his or her religion or ethnicity

### *Techniques of Analysis*

The data collected from the respondents was analyzed through appropriate statistical techniques. The ranking questions (Sections III and IV) were analyzed using the Friedman test, the nonparametric test appropriate for testing difference in rankings. The rating questions (Sections V and VI) were analyzed using descriptive statistics (*Ms* and *SDs*). Differences between groups were analyzed using independent-samples *t* tests (between genders) and one-way ANOVA (between age groups), which was corroborated with Mann–Whitney *U* tests (between genders) and Kruskal–Wallis tests (between age groups).

### *Respondent Profile*

The profile of respondents is presented in Table 1. The majority of the respondents were male (84%). In terms of age group, the majority of respondents were in the 26- to 30-year age group (65.70%), followed by the 21- to 25-year age group (23.30%). Most of the respondents were postgraduate degree holders (47.3%), followed by graduates (45.3%) and diploma holders (7.3%). In terms of experience, most of the respondents had experience of 2 to 5 years (49%), followed by 5 to 10 years of experience (29%). The majority of the respondents worked in multinational companies (MNCs; 82%), followed by respondents working in Indian MNCs (14.3%) and respondents working in Indian companies (3.7%). The majority of the respondents worked in large companies, with more than 4,000 employees (63%).

## **Major Findings and Discussion**

### *Strategies Adopted to Enhance Workplace Diversity*

Analysis of the strategies to enhance workplace diversity is shown in Table 2. To improve corporate culture, organizations need to include diversity as a cultural value in its members. The most prevalent strategies adopted to achieve this objective were by unleashing creativity and performance (2.07); increasing employee morale, productivity, and retention (2.20); giving new employees the opportunity to work in areas where they can be expected to advance (3.12); and



**Table 1.** Indicating the Profile of the Respondents

Variable	Levels	Percentage
Gender	Male	84.0
	Female	16.0
Age	21-25 years	23.3
	26-30 years	65.7
	31-35 years	11.0
Educational qualifications	Diploma	7.3
	Graduate	45.3
	Postgraduate	47.3
Experience	2 years	11.7
	2-5 years	49.0
	5-10 years	29.0
	10+ years	10.3
Type of company	MNC	82.0
	Indian	14.3
	Indian MNC	3.7
Employee strength	0-1,000	19.0
	1,000-2,000	4.3
	2,000-4,000	13.7
	4,000+	63.0
Attitude toward diversity	Diversity optimists	32.3
	Diversity realists	67.7

Note: Mean rank for Table 2 and 4 and mean for Table 4 and 5.

**Table 2.** Indicating the Prevalence of Different Strategies Enhancing Workplace Diversity

Strategies to enhance workplace diversity	Mean rank
Improving corporate culture by unleashing creativity and performance	2.07
Increasing employee morale, productivity, and retention	2.20
New employees are given an opportunity to work in area where they can expect to advance	3.12
By improving relationship with clients	3.30
Decreasing employee complaints and litigation	4.31
Friedman chi-square	398.349
Asymptotic significance	0.000

improving relationships with clients (3.30). The least prevalent strategy was that of decreasing employee complaints and litigation, a rather restrictive approach to handling workplace diversity.

Friedman's test was applied to test for the difference of ranking. It was found that there were significant differences in mean ranking for different strategies enhancing workplace diversity.

### Barriers for Accepting Workplace Diversity

Analysis of the barriers for accepting workplace diversity is shown in Table 3. It was found that the most prevalent barrier was discrimination (2.75), followed by prejudice (2.94), and ethnocentrism (3.83). Other barriers like blaming the victim (4.06), stereotypes (4.44), and harassment (4.77) were less prevalent, and the least prevalent was backlash (5.21).

Friedman's test was applied to test for the difference of ranking. It was found that there were significant differences in mean rankings of the different barriers to workplace diversity.

### Strategies to Increase Inclusiveness

Analysis of the strategies to increase inclusiveness is shown in Table 4. It was found that the most preferred strategies to increase inclusiveness in organizations were by learning about cultural difference and the way business is conducted in the country where the overseas assignment is (3.83), by learning about cultural difference and the way business is conducted in the country where the overseas assignment is (3.79), by encouraging employees to accept overseas assignments (3.67), and by offering language training to the employees (3.67). These strategies were preferred more by the respondents, whereas the other strategies such as accepting overseas assignment whenever given an opportunity (3.58), examining employee practices to ensure that the company is not intentionally or unintentionally discriminating against anyone to his or her religion or ethnicity (3.26), adapting to customs of the new country and getting to know the local residents while on an overseas assignment (3.25), providing transition counseling to employees and their families both before and after an overseas assignment (3.23), and finally learning other languages (3.01) were less preferred strategies to be adopted in the organization to increase inclusiveness.

### Strategies to Increase Awareness About Workplace Diversity

Analysis of the strategies to increase awareness about workplace diversity is shown in Table 5. Among the strategies for reducing prejudices and use of stereotypes, admitting to biases and prejudices (3.56) was considered the most effective strategy, followed by recognizing that diversity exists and learning to value and respect fundamental differences (3.25); dismissing myths about diverse others when in a group of friends or associates (3.23) was the least preferred strategy.

Among the strategies for minimizing miscommunication with diverse others, communicating effectively by listening attentively and asking questions was considered the most

**Table 3.** Indicating the Frequently Encountered Barriers

Barriers for accepting workplace diversity	Mean rank
Discrimination	2.75
Prejudice	2.94
Ethnocentrism	3.83
Blaming the victim	4.06
Stereotypes	4.44
Harassment	4.77
Backlash	5.21
Friedman chi-square	319.781
Asymptotic significance	0.000

effective strategy (4.01), followed by educating oneself about differences (3.70), avoiding terms that spotlight certain groups and imply the individual is an exception (3.51); avoiding to value one's message based on dress, mannerisms, accent, or eye contact (3.23) was the least preferred strategy.

Among the strategies for building relationships with diverse others, working with diverse others to achieve mutual goals was considered the most effective strategy (3.99); encouraging peers to be open and forming positive relationships with diverse others were also considered to be very good strategies (3.79), whereas seeking feedback from diverse others about how well one is communicating respect for them and valuing their diversity (3.49), and treating diverse others as invited guests by showing interest in them rather than treating them as strangers were less preferred strategies to be adopted to increase awareness about workplace diversity in the organizations.

It was found that the most prevalent strategy to increase awareness about workplace diversity was by communicating effectively, and listening attentively and asking questions about what one did not understand (4.01), followed by working with diverse others to achieve mutual goals (3.99); encouraging peers to be open in discussing their personal opinions, feelings, and reactions with oneself (3.79); educating oneself about differences by reading, listening, and broadening one's experience base about diverse people (3.7); admitting to one's own biases and prejudices and committing to reduce them (3.56); avoiding terms that spotlight certain groups and imply the individual is an exception (3.51); seeking feedback from diverse others about how well one is communicating respect for them and valuing their diversity (3.49); recognizing that diversity exists and learning to value and respect fundamental differences (3.25); dismissing myths about diverse others when in a group of friends or associates (3.23); avoiding to value one's message based on dress, mannerisms, accent, or eye contact (3.23); and finally by treating diverse others as invited guests by showing interest in them rather than treating them as strangers (3.07).

### *Differences Across Gender and Their Perception About Strategy to Increase Inclusiveness*

The analysis of differences between male and female employees' perceptions of strategies to increase inclusiveness is shown in Tables 6 and 7. It was found that there were significant differences between men and women professionals toward the organizational strategies for increasing inclusiveness. Men preferred to accept overseas assignment more whenever given an opportunity (3.65) compared with women (3.23); women were ready to adapt to customs of the new country and to know the local residents while on an overseas assignment (3.58), whereas men were reluctant (3.19); women preferred to learn other languages (3.73) whereas men did not prefer it as much as women (2.88); women preferred to learn about cultural difference and the way business is conducted in the country where the overseas assignment is (4.54) more compared with men (3.69); women were eager to offer language training to their employees (4.17) compared with men (3.58); women were ready to provide transition counseling to employees and their families both before and after an overseas assignment (3.98) more compared with men (3.09); women were more keen to get trained, to learn about and be sensitive to cross-cultural differences (4.25) compared with men (3.70); and finally women preferred to examine employee practices to ensure that the company is not intentionally or unintentionally discriminating against anyone to his or her religion or ethnicity (3.83) more compared with men (3.15). The Mann-Whitney *U* test corroborated these findings.

### *Differences Across Age Groups and Their Perception About Strategy to Increase Inclusiveness*

The analysis of differences across age groups of strategies to increase inclusiveness is shown in Tables 8 and 9. It was found that there were significant differences between age groups toward the organizational strategies for increasing inclusiveness. The perception toward accepting overseas assignment whenever given an opportunity was highest for the 21- to 25-year age group (4.17), followed by the 31- to 35-year age group (3.82) and the 26- to 30-year age group (3.34). The perception toward adapting to customs of the new country and getting to know the local residents while on an overseas assignment was highest for the 31- to 35-year age group (3.52), followed by the 26- to 30-year age group (3.36) and the 21- to 25-year age group (2.84). The perception toward learning about cultural difference and the way business is conducted in the country where the overseas assignment was highest for the 21- to 25-year age group (3.14), followed by the 31- to 35-year age group (3.03) and by the

**Table 4.** Indicating the Mean and Standard Deviation in Descending Order for Strategies to Increase Inclusiveness

Organizational strategies to increase inclusiveness	M	SD
By learning about cultural difference and the way business is conducted in the country where the overseas assignment is	3.83	1.16
By training employees to learn about and be sensitive to cross-cultural differences	3.79	1.022
By encouraging employees to accept overseas assignments	3.67	1.106
By offering language training to employees	3.67	1.219
By accepting overseas assignment whenever given an opportunity	3.58	1.203
By examining employee practices to ensure that the company is not intentionally or unintentionally discriminating against anyone to his or her religion or ethnicity	3.26	1.505
By adapting to customs of the new country and getting to know the local residents, while on an overseas assignment	3.25	1.083
By providing transition counseling to employees and their families both before and after an overseas assignment	3.23	1.121
By learning other languages	3.01	1.057

**Table 5.** Indicating the Mean and Standard Deviation in Descending Order for Strategies to Increase Awareness About Workplace Diversity

Strategies to increase awareness about workplace diversity	M	SD
(a) By reducing prejudices and use of stereotypes:		
Admit to one's own biases and prejudices and commit to reducing them	3.56	1.109
Recognize that diversity exists and learn to value and respect fundamental differences	3.25	1.162
Dismiss myths about diverse others when in a group of friends or associates	3.23	1.109
(b) By minimizing miscommunication with diverse others:		
Communicate effectively by listening attentively and asking questions about what one did not understand	4.01	0.973
Educate oneself about differences by reading, listening, and broadening one's experience base about diverse people	3.7	0.928
Avoid terms that spotlight certain groups and imply the individual is an exception	3.51	1.175
Avoid valuing one's message based on dress, mannerisms, accent, or eye contact	3.23	1.066
(c) By building relationships with diverse others:		
Work with diverse others to achieve mutual goals	3.99	1.028
Encourage one's peers to be open in discussing their personal opinions, feelings, and reactions with oneself	3.79	0.963
Seeking feedback from diverse others about how well one are communicating respect for them and valuing their diversity	3.49	1.086
Treating diverse others as invited guests by showing interest in them rather than treating them as strangers	3.07	1.316

26- to 30-year age group (2.96). The perception toward offering language training to employees was highest for the 31- to 35-year age group (3.94), followed by the 26- to 30-year age group (3.92) and the 21- to 25-year age group (3.53). The perception toward encouraging employees to accept overseas assignments was highest for the 21- to 25-year age group (4.31), followed by 26- to 30-year age group (3.54) and by the 31- to 35-year age group (3.12). The perception toward providing transition counseling to employees and their families both before and after an overseas assignment was highest for the 31- to 35-year age group (3.82), followed by the 26- to 30-year age group (3.29) and the 21- to 25-year age group (2.79). Finally, the perception toward examining employee practices to ensure that the company is not intentionally or

unintentionally discriminating against anyone to his or her religion or ethnicity was highest for the 31- to 35-year age group (4.15), followed by 26- to 30-year age group (3.21) and the 21- to 25-year age group (2.97). The Kruskal–Wallis test corroborated these findings.

### *Differences Across Gender and Their Perception Toward Strategies to Increase Awareness About Workplace Diversity*

The analysis of differences between male and female employees' perceptions toward strategies to increase awareness about workplace diversity is shown in Tables 10 and 11.

**Table 6.** Indicating t Test for Strategies to Increase Inclusiveness Between Gender

	Female	Male	t cal	Significance
By accepting overseas assignment whenever given an opportunity				
M	3.23	3.65	2.240	.026*
SD	1.491	1.131		
By adapting to customs of the new country and getting to know the local residents, while on an overseas assignment				
M	3.58	3.19	2.320	.021*
SD	0.919	1.102		
By learning other languages				
M	3.73	2.88	5.352	.000**
SD	0.818	1.043		
By learning about cultural difference and the way business is conducted in the country where the overseas assignment is				
M	4.54	3.69	4.806	.000**
SD	0.504	1.200		
By offering language training to your employees				
M	4.17	3.58	3.125	.002**
SD	0.519	1.290		
By encouraging employees to accept overseas assignments				
M	3.65	3.68	0.187	.851
SD	0.911	1.141		
By providing transition counseling to employees and their families both before and after an overseas assignment				
M	3.98	3.09	5.248	.000**
SD	0.838	1.113		
By training employees to learn about and be sensitive to cross-cultural difference				
M	4.25	3.70	3.490	.001**
SD	0.887	1.024		
By examining employee practices to ensure that the company is not intentionally or unintentionally discriminating against anyone to his or her religion or ethnicity				
M	3.83	3.15	2.933	.004**
SD	1.616	1.461		

\*Significant at the .05 level.

\*\*Significant at the .01 level.

**Table 7.** Indicating Mann–Whitney U Test for Strategies to Increase Inclusiveness Between Gender

		Female	Male	U cal <sup>a</sup>	z cal	Significance
By accepting overseas assignment whenever given an opportunity	Mean rank	131.52	154.12	5137.00	−1.734	.042*
By adapting to customs of the new country and getting to know the local residents, while on an overseas assignment	Mean rank	180.04	144.87	4630.00	−2.695	.004*
By learning other languages	Mean rank	205.05	140.11	3429.50	−4.935	.000**
By learning about cultural difference and the way business is conducted in the country where the overseas assignment is	Mean rank	200.29	141.02	3658.00	−4.540	.000**
By offering language training to the employees	Mean rank	178.20	145.22	4718.50	−2.503	.006**
By encouraging employees to accept overseas assignments	Mean rank	141.05	152.30	5594.50	−0.859	.195
By providing transition counseling to employees and their families both before and after an overseas assignment	Mean rank	206.23	139.88	3373.00	−5.063	.000**
By training employees to learn about and be sensitive to cross-cultural difference	Mean rank	188.57	143.25	4220.50	−3.475	.001**
By examining employee practices to ensure that the company is not intentionally or unintentionally discriminating against anyone to his or her religion or ethnicity	Mean rank	191.97	142.60	4057.50	−3.742	.000**

<sup>a</sup>Mann–Whitney test statistic denoted by U.

\*Significant at the .05 level.

\*\*Significant at the .01 level.



**Table 8.** Indicating ANOVA for Strategies to Increase Inclusiveness Between Age Groups

	21-25 years	26-30 years	31-35 years	F cal <sup>a</sup>	p value
By accepting overseas assignment whenever given an opportunity					
M	4.17	3.34	3.82	14.362	.000**
SD	1.049	1.182	1.185		
By adapting to customs of the new country and getting to know the local residents, while on an overseas assignment					
M	2.84	3.36	3.52	7.147	.001**
SD	1.044	1.013	1.349		
By learning other languages					
M	3.14	2.96	3.03	0.739	.478
SD	.687	1.037	1.667		
By learning about cultural difference and the way business is conducted in the country where the overseas assignment is					
M	3.53	3.92	3.94	3.131	.045*
SD	1.472	1.007	1.197		
By offering language training to your employees					
M	3.30	3.71	4.24	7.236	.001**
SD	1.232	1.251	0.614		
By encouraging employees to accept overseas assignments					
M	4.31	3.54	3.12	19.469	.000**
SD	0.468	1.081	1.576		
By providing transition counseling to employees and their families both before and after an overseas assignment					
M	2.79	3.29	3.82	11.064	.000**
SD	0.899	1.109	1.286		
By training employees to learn about and be sensitive to cross-cultural difference					
M	3.11	4.03	3.76	23.953	.000**
SD	1.210	0.826	1.032		
By examining employee practices to ensure that the company is not intentionally or unintentionally discriminating against anyone to his or her religion or ethnicity					
M	2.97	3.21	4.15	7.506	.001**
SD	1.154	1.648	0.795		

<sup>a</sup>Fisher's exact ratio.

\*Significant at the .05 level.

\*\*Significant at the .01 level.

It was found that there were significant differences between men and women professionals toward strategies for increasing awareness about workplace diversity. Women recognized that diversity exists and learned to value and respect fundamental differences (3.83) more compared with men (3.13); men dismissed myths about diverse others when in a group of friends or associates (3.31) more compared with women (2.85); men communicated effectively by listening attentively and asking questions about what they did not understand (4.06) more compared with women (3.73); women avoided valuing one's message based on dress, mannerisms, accent, or eye contact (3.81) more compared with men (3.52); finally, women were more willing to work with diverse others to achieve mutual goals (4.29) as compared with men (3.93). The Mann-Whitney *U* test corroborated these findings.

### *Differences Across Age Groups and Their Perception Toward Strategy to Increase Awareness About Workplace Diversity*

The analysis of differences across age groups of perceptions toward strategies to increase awareness about workplace diversity is shown in Tables 12 and 13. Significant differences were found across age groups in the perception toward admitting to one's own biases and prejudices and committing to reduce them; dismissing myths about diverse others when in a group of friends or associates; communicating effectively by listening attentively and asking questions about what one did not understand; avoiding valuing one's message based on dress, mannerisms, accent, or eye contact; forming positive relationship with diverse others; seeking feedback from diverse others about how well one is

**Table 9.** Indicating Kruskal–Wallis Test for Strategies to Increase Inclusiveness Between Age Groups

		21-25 years	26-30 years	31-35 years	$\chi^2$ cal	p value
By accepting overseas assignment whenever given an opportunity	Mean rank	196.55	131.03	169.06	34.255	.000**
By adapting to customs of the new country and getting to know the local residents, while on an overseas assignment	Mean rank	116.05	160.53	163.71	15.827	.000**
By learning other languages	Mean rank	161.63	146.20	152.55	1.783	.410
By learning about cultural difference and the way business is conducted in the country where the overseas assignment is	Mean rank	137.43	153.40	160.92	2.502	.286
By offering language training to the employees	Mean rank	123.27	154.26	185.79	13.693	.001**
By encouraging employees to accept overseas assignments	Mean rank	201.34	137.38	120.98	35.270	.000**
By providing transition counseling to employees and their families both before and after an overseas assignment	Mean rank	115.82	155.40	194.82	22.205	.000**
By training employees to learn about and be sensitive to cross-cultural difference	Mean rank	108.81	166.73	142.05	25.655	.000**
By examining employee practices to ensure that the company is not intentionally or unintentionally discriminating against anyone to his or her religion or ethnicity	Mean rank	126.48	151.32	196.58	15.760	.000**

\*Significant at the .05 level.

\*\*Significant at the .01 level.

communicating respect for them and valuing their diversity; and encouraging one's peers to be open in discussing their personal opinions, feelings, and reaction. The Kruskal–Wallis test corroborated these findings.

### Implications

As it was found that majority of the respondents were diversity realists, organizations should design and implement customized diversity programs that more precisely target the needs of individual employees, specific departments, or the organization as a whole. The result would be a more relevant and effective approach to managing workplace diversity; this would also strengthen employees' behaviors toward accepting diversity.

Organizations should design and support organizational culture that maximizes the benefits of diversity, and use that culture to manage various groups of organizational members, project teams, business start-up teams, customer service response teams, and top management. It would be worthwhile if these strategies were implemented more often in IT organizations to increase workplace diversity. The results of the most prevalent strategies adopted to enhance workplace diversity reinforce these processes in IT organizations.

As it was found that discrimination was the most frequently encountered barrier for accepting workplace

diversity, employees and applicants for employment should be treated fairly in their employment and advancement, based on their abilities, and not based on arbitrary characteristics of color, religion, national origin, gender, age, sexual orientation, or physical handicap. This would eliminate this barrier to a very great extent.

Some of the strategies that lead to inclusiveness that can be practiced in organizations are systematic learning about cultural differences and the way business is conducted in the country where the overseas assignment is, training employees to learn about and be sensitive to cross-cultural differences, encouraging employees to accept overseas assignments, and offering language training, which can improve employees' ability to work with diverse others with cultural differences and increase inclusiveness in an organization. By implementing the following strategies, organizations can improve employees ability to work with diverse others with cultural differences from their own. This will increase inclusiveness in an organization.

Organizations can minimize miscommunication with diverse others and build relationships with diverse others by implementing the following strategies, that is, by communicating effectively, working with diverse others, encouraging peers to be open in discussing their personal opinions, and educating employees about differences. These strategies will increase awareness about workplace diversity.

**Table 10.** Indicating ANOVA for Strategies to Increase Awareness About Workplace Diversity Between Gender

	Female	Male	t cal	Significance
Recognize that diversity exists and learn to value and respect fundamental differences				
M	3.83	3.13	3.906	.000**
SD	1.098	1.142		
Admit to one's own biases and prejudices and committing to reduce them				
M	3.81	3.52	1.704	.045*
SD	1.299	1.065		
Dismiss myths about diverse others when in a group of friends or associates				
M	2.85	3.31	2.610	.010*
SD	1.516	1.001		
Educate oneself about differences by reading, listening, and broadening the experience base about diverse people				
M	3.69	3.70	0.006	.941
SD	0.468	0.992		
Communicate effectively by listening attentively and asking questions about what one did not understand				
M	3.73	4.06	4.823	.029*
SD	0.449	1.035		
Avoid terms that spotlight certain groups and imply the individual is an exception				
M	3.77	3.46	2.905	.045*
SD	1.115	1.182		
Avoid valuing one's message based on dress, mannerisms, accent, or eye contact				
M	3.52	3.18	4.202	.041*
SD	0.505	1.134		
Forming positive relationship with diverse others				
M	3.73	3.73	0.000	.996
SD	0.818	1.233		
Seeking feedback from diverse others about how well one is communicating respect for them and valuing their diversity				
M	3.73	3.44	2.864	.092
SD	0.844	1.122		
Treating diverse others as invited guests by showing interest in them rather than treating them as strangers				
M	3.21	3.04	0.631	.428
SD	1.271	1.325		
Encourage one's peers to be open in discussing their personal opinions, feelings, and reactions				
M	3.56	3.84	3.310	.035*
SD	1.165	0.915		
Work with diverse others to achieve mutual goals				
M	4.29	3.93	5.100	.025*
SD	0.824	1.054		

\*Significant at the .05 level.

\*\*Significant at the .01 level.

As significant differences were found among gender for strategies to increase inclusiveness, organizations should implement different strategies for male and female according to their preferences. Men preferred accepting overseas

assignment whenever given an opportunity. Women were keen on adapting to customs of the new country and getting to know the local residents, while on an overseas assignment; learning other languages; learning about cultural

**Table 11.** Indicating Mann–Whitney *U* Test for Strategies to Increase Awareness About Workplace Diversity Between Gender

		Female	Male	<i>U</i> cal <sup>a</sup>	<i>z</i> cal	Significance
Recognize that diversity exists and learn to value and respect fundamental differences	Mean rank	192.40	142.52	4037.00	−3.771	.000**
Admit to one's own biases and prejudices and commit to reduce them	Mean rank	169.83	146.82	5120.00	−1.744	.041*
Dismiss myths about diverse others when in a group of friends or associates	Mean rank	122.86	155.76	4721.50	−2.514	.006**
Educate oneself about differences by reading, listening, and broadening one's experience base about diverse people	Mean rank	143.28	151.88	5701.50	−0.671	.251
Communicate effectively by listening attentively and ask questions about what one did not understand	Mean rank	110.80	158.06	4142.50	−3.679	.000**
Avoid terms that spotlight certain groups and imply the individual is an exception	Mean rank	175.59	145.72	4843.50	−2.299	.011*
Avoid valuing one's message based on dress, mannerisms, accent, or eye contact	Mean rank	174.61	145.91	4890.50	−2.179	.019*
Forming positive relationship with diverse others	Mean rank	136.13	153.24	5358.00	−1.317	.094
Seeking feedback from diverse others about how well one is communicating respect for them and valuing their diversity	Mean rank	166.09	147.53	5299.50	−1.410	.075
Treating diverse others as invited guests by showing interest in them rather than treating them as strangers	Mean rank	157.99	149.07	5688.50	−0.669	.252
Encourage one's peers to be open in discussing their personal opinions, feeling, and reactions	Mean rank	134.85	153.48	5297.00	−1.458	.073
Work with diverse others to achieve mutual goals	Mean rank	173.43	146.13	4947.50	−2.108	.018*

<sup>a</sup>Mann–Whitney test statistic denoted by *U*.

\*Significant at the .05 level.

\*\*Significant at the .01 level.

difference and the way business is conducted in the country where the overseas assignment is; offering language training to your employees; providing transition counseling to employees and their families before and after an overseas assignment; training employees to learn about and be sensitive to cross-cultural differences; examining employee practices to ensure that the company is not intentionally or unintentionally discriminating against anyone to his or her religion or ethnicity; and finally implementing different strategies according to gender organization to increase inclusiveness.

As significant differences were found among different age groups for strategies to increase inclusiveness, organizations must implement different strategies according to the preferences of different age groups toward strategies to increase inclusiveness. The age group of 21 to 25 years preferred to accept overseas assignment whenever given an opportunity, whereas the age group of 31 to 35 preferred to adapt customs of the new country and got to know the local residents while on an overseas assignment.

As significant differences were found among gender for strategies to increase awareness about workplace diversity, organizations ought to implement different strategies for male and female employees to increase awareness about workplace

diversity. Women preferred to recognize that diversity exists and learn to value and respect fundamental differences; they preferred to avoid valuing one's message based on dress, mannerisms, accent or eye contact, and were willing to work with diverse others to achieve mutual goals to increase awareness about workplace diversity. Men felt that dismissing myths about diverse others when in a group of friends or associates, and communicating effectively by listening attentively and asking questions about what they did not understand were preferred strategies to increase awareness about workplace diversity.

As significant differences were found among different age groups for strategies to increase awareness about workplace diversity, organizations ought to implement different strategies according to age groups and preferences to increase awareness about workplace diversity. Employees of the age group between 26 and 30 years preferred admitting to their own biases and prejudices and committing to reduce them; communicating effectively by listening attentively and asking questions about what they did not understand; and forming positive relationship with diverse others to increase awareness about workplace diversity. Employees of 31- to 35-year age group preferred dismissing myths about diverse

**Table 12.** Indicating ANOVA for Strategies to Increase Awareness About Workplace Diversity Between Age Groups

	21-25 years	26-30 years	31-35 years	<i>F</i> cal <sup>a</sup>	<i>p</i> value
Recognize that diversity exists and learn to value and respect fundamental differences				2.107	
<i>M</i>	3.00	3.33	3.27		.123
<i>SD</i>	0.799	1.199	1.506		
Admit to one's own biases and prejudices and commit to reduce them				19.909	.000**
<i>M</i>	3.00	3.84	3.12		
<i>SD</i>	0.978	0.911	1.728		
Dismiss myths about diverse others when in a group of friends or associates				13.861	.000**
<i>M</i>	2.66	3.38	3.58		
<i>SD</i>	1.238	0.960	1.251		
Educate oneself about differences by reading, listening, and broadening one's experience base about diverse people				1.069	.345
<i>M</i>	3.83	3.67	3.58		
<i>SD</i>	0.680	0.936	1.275		
Communicate effectively by listening attentively and asking questions about what one did not understand				10.718	.000**
<i>M</i>	3.59	4.18	3.88		
<i>SD</i>	1.000	0.712	1.728		
Avoid terms that spotlight certain groups and imply the individual is an exception				1.916	.149
<i>M</i>	3.30	3.54	3.76		
<i>SD</i>	0.749	1.307	1.032		
Avoid valuing one's message based on dress, mannerisms, accent, or eye contact				26.321	.000**
<i>M</i>	3.97	3.04	2.82		
<i>SD</i>	0.613	1.087	0.983		
Forming positive relationship with diverse others				4.049	.018*
<i>M</i>	3.41	3.86	3.61		
<i>SD</i>	1.268	1.202	0.496		
Seeking feedback from diverse others about how well one is communicating respect for them and valuing their diversity				3.074	.048*
<i>M</i>	3.31	3.48	3.88		
<i>SD</i>	0.468	1.163	1.431		
Treating diverse others as invited guests by showing interest in them rather than treating them as strangers				0.365	.694
<i>M</i>	3.19	3.04	3.00		
<i>SD</i>	0.906	1.377	1.658		
Encourage one's peers to be open in discussing their personal opinions, feelings, and reactions				20.989	.000**
<i>M</i>	4.33	3.55	4.09		
<i>SD</i>	0.737	1.017	0.292		
Work with diverse others to achieve mutual goals				1.163	.314
<i>M</i>	3.84	4.05	3.91		
<i>SD</i>	1.431	0.807	1.182		

<sup>a</sup>Fisher's exact ratio.

\*Significant at the .05 level.

\*\*Significant at the .01 level.



**Table 13.** Indicates Kruskal–Wallis Test for Strategies to Increase Awareness About Workplace Diversity Between Age Groups

		21-25 years	26-30 years	31-35 years	$\chi^2$ cal	p value
Recognize that diversity exists and learn to value and respect fundamental differences	Mean rank	134.23	157.25	144.70	4.058	.131
Admit to one's own biases and prejudices and committing to reduce them	Mean rank	102.73	170.47	132.64	35.425	.000**
Dismiss myths about diverse others when in a group of friends or associates	Mean rank	104.71	163.60	169.42	27.862	.000**
Educate oneself about differences by reading, listening, and broadening one's experience base about diverse people	Mean rank	157.05	148.71	147.27	0.601	.740
Communicate effectively by listening attentively and asking questions about what one did not understand	Mean rank	112.54	160.14	173.47	20.523	.000**
Avoid terms that spotlight certain groups and imply the individual is an exception	Mean rank	145.89	148.79	170.48	2.239	.326
Avoid valuing one's message based on dress, mannerisms, accent, or eye contact	Mean rank	211.24	134.45	117.48	49.305	.000**
Forming positive relationship with diverse others	Mean rank	127.30	163.48	122.24	14.279	.001**
Seeking feedback from diverse others about how well one is communicating respect for them and valuing their diversity	Mean rank	132.76	151.89	179.86	7.277	.026*
Treating diverse others as invited guests by showing interest in them rather than treating them as strangers	Mean rank	156.49	148.96	147.07	0.472	.790
Encourage one's peers to be open in discussing their personal opinions, feelings, and reactions	Mean rank	196.37	131.08	169.14	35.398	.000**
Work with diverse others to achieve mutual goals	Mean rank	153.53	149.59	149.48	0.124	.940

\*Significant at the .05 level.

\*\*Significant at the .01 level.

others when in a group of friends or associates and seeking feedback from diverse others about how well they are communicating respect for them and valuing their diversity to increase awareness about workplace diversity. Employees between 21 and 25 years of age preferred avoiding valuing one's message based on dress, mannerisms, accent, or eye contact and encouraging peers to be open in discussing their personal opinions, feelings, and reactions with them to increase awareness about workplace diversity.

### Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations inherent in the study. Although a moderately large sample size was used for the study, the sample was a convenient sample among the top 15 IT organizations in India. Thus, the sample may not be a truly representative sample, and the results of the study cannot be generalized across the entire IT industry. The limitations of the study suggest several prospects for further research. There is vast scope for further study of the factors affecting workplace diversity in IT organizations, as well as other industries,

such as manufacturing and service industries. Furthermore, diversity management practices can be compared between industries, and their impact on employee productivity and job satisfaction can be studied. There is also a vast scope for studies of perceptions of workplace diversity in different ethnic groups, religion-based groups, and marginalized groups.

### Conclusion

Organizations with diverse employees are better suited to serve diverse external customers in an increasingly global market. Such organizations have a better understanding of the requirements of the legal, political, social, economic, and cultural environments.

The results of the study provide considerable insight on present diversity management practices in the IT industry. Most of the employees are positive that they can cope with diversity (diversity realists), while a few of the employees have understood, adjusted, and are enthusiastic to work and leverage positive workplace diversity (diversity optimists). The major strategies adopted by organizations to increase inclusiveness is

by training employees to be sensitive to cross-cultural differences, encouraging employees to accept overseas assignments, and offering foreign language training. The study also focuses on barriers encountered by employees for accepting workplace diversity in IT sectors in India. Discrimination was the most frequently encountered barrier for accepting workplace diversity, followed by prejudice and ethnocentrism. The study clearly emphasizes that organizations should take measures to manage diversity to harness and leverage the potential of employees for competitive advantage.

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