
The Impact of Workforce Diversity on Employee Performance

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Abstract

Workforce diversity has been identified as one of the strategic capabilities that will add value to the organizations over their competition. The purpose of this research is to study the impact of workforce diversity on employee performance in the apparel industry in Sri Lanka. There are numerous diversity factors that can affect the performance of the employees, but this research included only the most critical variables among all the others such as diversity in age, educational background, religion, work experience, and attitudes towards the job of the employees which were independent variables, and employee performance in an organization which was a dependent variable. For this study, the simple random sampling technique was used and data was collected by personally distributing 120 questionnaires to the production level employees in one of the garment factories in Sri Lanka. Regression analysis technique was used to find the impact among the variables. The results concluded that there is a significant and positive impact on the diversity of age, educational background, religion, work experience and attitudes towards the job of employee performance.

Keywords: Apparel Industry, Employee Performance, Workforce Diversity

1. Introduction

The modern workforce is far more varied in its composition than it has been previously. The success of any organization depends on the employees or workforce of that organization because they carry out the operations of the organization. The word 'diversity' means the range of human differences including, but are not limited to age, race, gender, abilities, education, disabilities, culture, and religion (Srivastava & Agarwal, 2012). Over the last few years, it was getting clearer that organizations proceeded to pursue workforce diversity as a

competitive necessity and recognized and utilized it as one of the most important factors. Any business that intends to be successful must have a great view and commitment to ensure that workforce diversity is part of their day-to-day business operations. Workforce diversity can present major challenges as well as opportunities to the organization (Childs Jr, 2005). If organizations could manage these differences of employees, they would be much more effective.

With the mixture of talents of diverse cultural backgrounds, gender, age, educational backgrounds, abilities, and religion an organization can respond to business opportunities more rapidly and creatively (Srivastava & Agarwal, 2012). It is one of the important organizational goals to be achieved. More importantly, if the organizational environment does not support diversity broadly, there will be a potential for higher voluntary employee turnover, difficulty in communication, and interpersonal conflicts (Christian, Porter, & Moffitt, 2006). Overall, if managers do not know the factors which contribute to effective diversity management they are unable to effectively deal with diversity-related issues. It will be adversarial to the organization's performance (Childs Jr, 2005). Therefore, this study investigated the impact of workforce diversity on employee performance in one garment factory in Sri Lanka.

1.1. Research Problem

In today's world, workforce diversity is globally perceived and it has become an interesting issue at the workplace and market. Organizations that promote and achieve an effective diverse workplace will attract and retain quality employees and increase customer loyalty (Srivastava & Agarwal, 2012). This diversity is viewed as a positive force for employees' job performance by one sector, (Choi & Rainey, 2010) while on the other term it is detrimental to employees' job performance. Studies show that organizations with high levels of well-managed diversity are effective and steering ultimately producing corporate cultures that have new perspectives, pioneering capabilities, and fresh ideas which are necessary to survive (Childs Jr, 2005). Choi and Rainey (2010) argued that workforce diversity creates conflicts and uncertainty in the workforce. Sometimes, it could be a simple miscommunication and misunderstanding. That is why a company cannot ignore such actions within working groups, because it will result in a turnover and more interpersonal conflicts.

This research mainly focuses on the apparel industry in Sri Lanka. It will surely have to face the diversity issue of the workers and to solve those issues which are very important for such

a big industry to grow. Furthermore, workforce diversity has not been paid enough attention for examining the variables that may influence employee performance(Childs Jr, 2005). Especially there are not enough studies that focus on how age diversity, education background diversity, religious diversity, work experience diversity and attitude diversity on the job of the employees influence employee performance. In addition, none of these studies had been conducted in the apparel industry in Sri Lanka to the best search among local literature by the researchers. Hence, this study attempts to verify the impact of workforce diversity on employee performance in one of the garment factories in Sri Lanka.

1.2. Research Questions

In this research, there are basically two types of research questions: a general question and specific questions

General Question of the Study

- *What is the impact of workforce diversity on employee performance?*

Specific Questions of the Study

- *What is the impact of the diversity of age on employee performance?*
- *What is the impact of the diversity of educational background on employee performance?*
- *What is the impact of the diversity of religion on employee performance?*
- *What is the impact of the diversity of work experience on employee performance?*
- *What is the impact of the diversity of attitudes towards the job on employee performance?*

2. Literature Review

2.1. Employee Performance

ODHIAMBO (2014) On human capital development defined performance as the effective discharge of duty for which one is hired to do. Zhuwao (2017)defined employee performance as the successful completion of tasks by a selected individual, whereas Krishnan,

Gowrishankar, and Kanagaraj (2017) identified it as efficiently and effectively utilizing the available resources within a changing environment.

2.2. Workforce Diversity

Childs Jr (2005) defined workforce diversity as the degree of heterogeneity among employees that is precisely limited to specific cultural attributes such as: age, class, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, race, economic status, sexual orientation, educational background, marital status, union affiliation, work content, attitudes, morale, beliefs, and interests (Choi & Rainey, 2010).

2.2.1. Concept of Diversity- Iceberg Model

According to Sartorius, Merino, and Carmichael (2011), the iceberg model depicts the diversity dimensions. As an analogy to the iceberg, these dimensions have three facets.

Table 1: Dimensions of Diversity

Primary Dimensions	Secondary Dimensions	Tertiary Dimensions
Race	Religion	Beliefs
Ethnicity	Educational Background	Assumptions
Gender	Sexual Orientation	Perceptions
Age	Thinking Style	Attitudes
Disability	Geographical Origin	Feelings
	Marital status	Values
	Political Orientation	Group Norms
	Work Experience	
	Culture	
	Language	

Source: Mazur (2010)

Given the above, age diversity, educational background diversity, religious diversity, work experience diversity, and attitude diversity are used in this research to examine the impact of workforce diversity on employee performance. According to the previous research, these five dimensions have proven to have a strong impact on employee performance than other dimensions. Elsaid (2012) and Zhuwao (2017).

2.2.2. Age Diversity

According to Kunze, Boehm, and Bruch (2013), age diversity is defined as the differences in age distribution among employees and is used to describe the composition of the organization or the composition of workgroups within an organization. Growing age diversity has turned out to be an integral part of many organizations.

2.2.3. Educational Background Diversity

Pretty et al. (2009) revealed education diversity as different levels of education and different educational certifications. Most organizations implement educational diversity initiatives to motivate and encourage employees to work effectively with others so that organizational goals are achieved (Lieu et al., 2011).

2.2.4. Religious Diversity

Religious diversity is the fact that there are significant differences in religious beliefs and practices (Watson, Johnson, & Zgourides, 2002). According to Hicks (2002), the differences in cultural characteristics were predictive of team scores, which can be interpreted as the advantage of having different religious views for team problem-solving resulted in increased team performance after the teams learned how to utilize these differences to their benefit.

2.2.5. Work Experience Diversity

Employee diversity in experience is defined by Carr, Pearson, Vest, and Boyar (2006) as the differences in knowledge, skills, and abilities gained in a specific career line. According to Carr et al. (2006), work experience has been defined as the length of experience in a given occupation.

2.2.6. Attitude Diversity on the Job

Attitude diversity on the job is a set of one's job that constitutes one's different feelings, beliefs, and attachment to one's job (Jones, 2016). According to Shore et al. (2009), Positive job attitudes help to predict constructive behaviours whereas negative job attitudes help to predict undesirable behaviours. The study focuses on attitudes on job satisfaction, organization commitment, and job involvement.

2.3. Prior Research on Study Variables

Various studies have been conducted on workforce diversity and workplace diversity management. For instance, A study has been done on the influence of personality workforce dimensions on the organizational performance of Kenya Medical Research Institute(Sikalieh & Mkoji, 2012).(Elsaid, 2012) did a study on the effects of cross-cultural workforce diversity on employee performance in Egyptian pharmaceutical organizations. According, Leonard, Levine, and Joshi (2004) the past research on workplace diversity have suggested that diversity can be either detrimental or beneficial for workgroup performance.

3. Methods

3.1. Research Method

To examine the impact of workforce diversity on employee performance, this research used statistical analysis tools. The researcher adopted a quantitative approach as per the methodology of this study. The method applied was non-interactive, self-administered surveys so as to collect the necessary data.

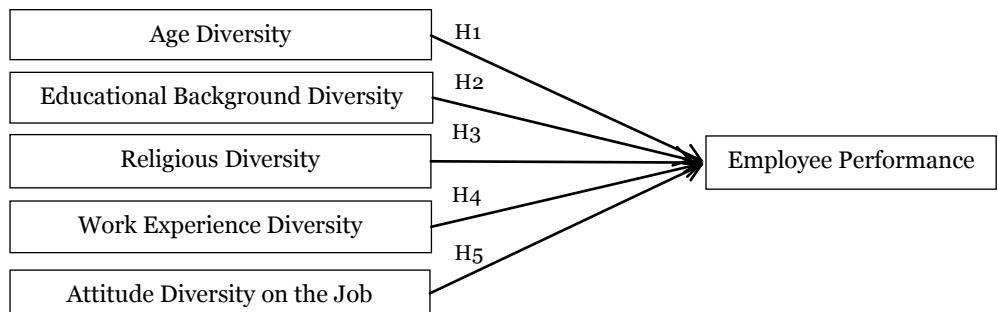


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

This research is categorized under 'descriptive research designs.' The unit of analysis is individual employees. The theoretical population is production level employees of the apparel industry in Sri Lanka. The study population is production level employees in one of the garment factories in Sri Lanka. The exact sample which was derived from this population was 120 though the intention was to collect 150 responses from employees, due to the response rate; the researcher was forced to reduce the number of response target to 120.

The sampling method was the probability sampling method and under this method, Simple Random Sampling (SRS) was used as a technique. The data collection method was surveyed under an interactive method and tool used was questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed physically. Then the responses were statistically analyzed using SPSS version 20.

After conducting an extensive literature review, five hypotheses have been formulated to cover the scope of the study. These were formulated by considering previously done research. Most of the researchers revealed that increasing age diversity was positively related to employee performance (Zhuwao, 2017). After considering these facts, the first hypothesis was developed as *H1: There is a positive impact of age diversity on employee performance*. Most of the researchers revealed that educational diversity was positively and significantly related to employee performance (Elsaid, 2012). Thus, the next hypothesis was developed as *H2: There is a positive impact of education background diversity on employee performance*. Based on the literature, the third hypothesis was developed as *H3: There is a positive impact of religious diversity on employee performance*. Existing literature provided evidence that increasing religious diversity was positively related to employee performance (Green, 2003). Most of the researchers revealed that there is a positive relationship between diversity in employee prior work experience and job performance (Kotur & Anbazhagan, 2014). After considering these facts, a hypothesis was developed as *H4: There is a positive impact of work experience diversity on employee performance*. Based on the literature, the next hypothesis was developed as *H5: There is a positive impact of attitude diversity on the job on employee performance*. Existing literature provided evidence that increasing attitude diversity on the job was positively related to employee performance (Saeed et al., 2013).

3.2. Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was designed based on the hypothesis. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework developed in order to get a clear idea about the relationship between those factors in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed in a manner where the first section included the general questions, section two comprised of all the questions associated with independent variables and finally the third section of the questionnaire which included questions raised on the dependent variables. Five-point Likert-scale was used to capture responses from the operation level employees, which allowed them to mark their level of the agreement such as strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree.

Table 2: Operationalization

Concept	Dimension	Measurement Variables	Source	Measurement Method
Demo- Graphic	Gender	Male	(Elsaid, 2012)	Categorical Expression
		Female		
	Marital Status	Married		
		Unmarried		
Workforce Diversity	Age Diversity	Widowed	(Elsaid, 2012)	Five-Point Likert Scale
		Employee Mentoring		
		Conflict Handling		
	Educational Background Diversity	Bonding with Others	(Elsaid, 2012)	Five-Point Likert Scale
		Growth and Advancement		
		Assistance to Others		
	Religious Diversity	Training and Development	(Elsaid, 2012)	Five-Point Likert Scale
		Creative Solution		
		Customs, Cultures, Values		
	Work Experience Diversity	Problem-solving and Decision-making	(Njogu, 2017)	Five-Point Likert Scale
Adapt to Organization Culture				
Effective Work				
Attitude Diversity	Working Condition	(Saeed et al., 2013)	Five-Point Likert Scale	
	Loyalty to the Organization			
	Job Involvement			
Employee Performance		Organization Commitment	(Elsaid, 2012)	Five-Point Likert Scale
		Co-operation		
		Motivation		
		Satisfaction		

4. Data Analysis and Results

4.1. Demographic Analysis

One hundred and twenty production level employees were selected as respondents to study the impact of workforce diversity on employee performance. Out of 120 responses, 74.2%

were female employees and 25.8% were male employees. When considering the Sri Lankan apparel industry, it had highly attracted female employees more than male employees. According to the results of frequency statistics, this sample also depicted that it included more female workers than male workers. Most of the respondents were married (70%). Thus 27.5% of the respondents were unmarried. With that 2.5% of respondents were widowed and no respondents were of the divorced category in this sample.

4.2. Measurement Model Assessment

Before doing the correlation and regression analysis, it was important to assess the measurement model. Validity and reliability tests were analyzed under this. Factor analysis technique was used to statistically test the validity of the questions in the questionnaire. The result of the KMO and Bartlett's Test was 0.742. It was higher than 0.6 and it indicated that the sampling of this study was adequate. Table 3 illustrated the validity statistics related to the study.

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.742
	Approx. Chi-Square	2840.795
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Df	741
	Sig.	.000

Source: Survey Data (2018)

A reliability test was performed to measure the internal consistency of the variables. Reliability is basically being tested by using the "Cronbach Alpha Method." The test was significant when Alpha value resulted in more than 0.7. George and Mallery (2003) provided the following rules for alpha values: (Alpha value > 0.9 – Excellent, Alpha value > 0.8 – Good, Alpha value > 0.7 – Acceptable, Alpha value > 0.6 – Questionable, Alpha value > 0.5 – Poor, Alpha value < 0.5 – Unacceptable). The values of Cronbach's Alpha were depicted in Table 4, the reliability coefficient attained by all constructs was satisfactory as they were above 0.60; thus it proved high levels of reliability within the collected data of this research.

Table 4: Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Age Diversity	0.894	6
Educational Background Diversity	0.820	5
Religious Diversity	0.810	6
Work Experience Diversity	0.785	6
Attitude Diversity on the Job	0.775	6
Employee Performance	0.770	10

Source: Survey Data (2018)

4.3. Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis helped to determine the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to show the direction, strength, and significance of the relationship. From the findings, it was found that there was a positive association of age diversity, education background diversity, religious diversity, work experience diversity and attitude diversity on the job on employees' performance.

Table 5: Correlation Analysis

	AD	EB	RD	WE	AJ	EP
AD	1					
EB	-.205*	1				
RD	.462**	-.303**	1			
WE	.110	-.120	-.123	1		
AJ	.507**	-.059	.412**	-.072	1	
EP	.456**	.094	.328**	.139	.414**	1

Source: Survey Data (2018)

AD=Age Diversity, EB= Educational Background Diversity, RD= Religious Diversity, WE =Work Experience Diversity, AJ =Attitude Diversity, EP= Employee Performance

4.4. Hypothesis Testing

Regression analysis was conducted to test the pre-established hypotheses in this study. Multiple linear regression analysis was performed to determine whether the independent variables (age diversity, educational background diversity, religious diversity, work experience diversity and attitude diversity on the job) predict the dependent variable (employee performance).

Table 6: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.577 ^a	.333	.304	.19641

Source: Survey Data (2018)

a. Predictors: (Constant), Attitude Diversity, Education Background Diversity, Work Experience Diversity, Religious Diversity, Age diversity.

The model summary illustrated the Adjusted R square value which helped in explaining variance in the dependent variable; employee performance. Based on the results in Table 6 the Adjusted R square value was 0.304. This means that there is a change of 30.4% in the dependent variable due to the effect of the independent variables.

Table 7: ANOVA Test

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	2.197	5	.439	11.388	.000 ^b
1 Residual	4.398	114	.039		
Total	6.595	119			

Source: Survey Data (2018)

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance, b. Predictors: (Constant), Attitude Diversity, Educational Background Diversity, Work Experience Diversity, Religious Diversity, Age diversity

The ANOVA was performed to test the statistical significance of the regression model on whether it was good in predicting variables that influenced the dependent variable. From the findings, the significant value was 0.000 which was less than 0.05 and hence the model was good in predicting how the five independent variables influenced employee performance. It is illustrated in Table 7.

Table8: Coefficients of Variables

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.122	.626		.194	.846
AD	.270	.092	.284	2.945	.004
EB	.197	.065	.249	3.036	.003
RD	.242	.110	.207	2.211	.029
WE	.141	.063	.178	2.229	.028
AJ	.184	.080	.212	2.299	.023

Source: Survey Data (2018)

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

AD=Age diversity, EB= Education Background Diversity, RD= Religious Diversity, WE =Work experience Diversity, AJ =Attitude Diversity, EP= Employee Performance

Here in the coefficient Table 8, the standardized beta value would be taken into consideration. When analyzing the five independent variables, the significance values need less than 0.05 to accept as significant and the value of beta is positive which states that the impact is positive. The impact of age diversity on employee performance was 0.284. It was significant as shown by a significant value of 0.004. Increase in educational background diversity would lead to an employee performance by 0.249. This impact was significant as shown by the significant value of 0.003. Increase in religious diversity impact to employee performance by 0.207 within a significant value of 0.029. The impact of work experience diversity on employee performance was 0.178 by a significant value of 0.028. The last one was attitude diversity on the job, that impact employee performance by 0.212. This impact was significant as shown by a significant value of 0.023. Thereby it proved that these five

factors had a positive and significant impact on employee performance. Thus, those five hypotheses were accepted.

5. Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of workforce diversity on employee performance. The effects of workforce diversity were measured in terms of age diversity, educational background diversity, religious diversity, work experience diversity and attitude diversity on the job. According to the results obtained by the regression analysis, it was revealed that there was a positive and significant Impact of workforce diversity on employee performance. The findings showed that there was a positive and significant relationship between age diversity and employee performance. The findings of all these research work stated that increasing age diversity was positively related to employee performance. The results of the analysis indicated that there was a significant and positive relationship between educational background diversity and employee performance. Previous research work by ODHIAMBO (2014), Elsaid (2012), all had arrived at the same conclusions stating that educational diversity was positively and significantly related to employee performance. Yet again, these previous findings were proved through the results obtained from the present study. The results obtained showed that religious and employee performance had a positive and significant relationship. Upon reviewing previous literature McLeod, Lobel, and Cox Jr (1996), Watson, et al, (1993), reported research findings stating that more religiously different views for solving problems in the team led to increasing the performance of employees. The results show that work experience diversity is positively and significantly related to employee performance. Previous research work by Dokko, Wilk, and Rothbard (2009)all had arrived at the same conclusions stating that there was a positive relationship between diversity in employee prior work experience and job performance. The results of the analysis indicated that there was a significant and positive relationship between attitude diversity on the job and employee performance through the regression analysis results obtained for the present study, it further established the findings of previous research work explaining that there was a positive impact of attitude diversity on the job on employee performance. Therefore, this study recommended that senior management of the organization needed to focus more on diversity management to improve the performance employee within the organization. It was also recommended that organizational leaders should formulate laws and policies on equal employment, irrespective of their cultural background, ethnic group, and gender in other to encourage creativity and innovation in the organization and that ensured that the most qualified employees were recruited. These

human resources policies benefited the workplace by increasing employee work performance.

6. Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to identify the impact of workforce diversity on employee performance in operation level employees. Under that age diversity, educational background diversity, religious diversity, work experience diversity, attitude diversity on the job were proved to have a positive and significant impact on employee performance. This research provided strong evidence to prove their impact. But this research was limited to one organization and hence more studies should be conducted to focus on other sectors also. In addition, future researchers can focus on additional independent variables which could have a more significant impact on the variance of employee performance. Therefore, the study recommends future research to go deeper into this area. This study would serve as a guide for future research.

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