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The Impact of Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives on Organizational Performance Using the Resource-Based View Model

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Abstract

This paper analyses diversity and inclusion (D&I) programs within the context of the Resource-Based View (RBV) of strategy to determine the way optimally framing D&I programs might impact organizational performance. The strategy of D&I, used to garner competitive advantage, within the realm of RBV, may point to an increase in the performance of an organization. This study attempts to answer the question of the impact of D&I initiatives, as organizational resources, on productivity, employee engagement, and developmental and innovative organizational outcomes. A survey of 300 employees in the various sectors and organizing their performance data for an entire year was the basis for a mixed model research and design. Structural equation modeling (SEM) and regression were used to assess D&I initiatives against organizational performance. Major outcome variables demonstrate a significant positive correlational relationship to D&I initiatives. The effect in organizations with a robust D&I framework represents an increase of 15% to productivity, 20% to employee engagement, and an increase of 25% to innovation in comparison to organizations with a weak D&I framework. These results demonstrate the notable benefit of D&I initiatives in the workplace and the greater D&I initiatives within an organization. The results of the study show the necessity for a progressive view of D&I within an organization. It is the recommendation of this study to focus on the D&I initiatives as the cornerstone building block of a progressive scope for D&I-friendly innovative environments/performance. The reciprocal nature of a progressive scope for D&I seeks transformation and change in the performance of inclusive environments. This research highlights that D&I is more than a social obligation; it can also be a strategic advantage that ensures a company's prolonged viability.

Keywords: Diversity and Inclusion, Organizational Performance, Resource-Based View, HRM, Competitive Advantage, Employee Engagement.

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Introduction

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) has emerged as a dominant focus for companies around the world over the past few years. Primarily, D&I aims to develop a culture that supports differences in individuals' attributes (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation, etc.) to create more equity and greater inclusion in the workplace. D&I initiatives are based on the premise that diverse teams are bound to provide a richer set of ideas and perspectives, so organizations are positioned to improve their goal of moral and equity D&I as a strategic and competitive imperative to enhance organizational performance (Hanif et al., 2022). There is a wealth of literature on the D&I relative to organizational performance (Khan & Jabeen, 2019). This is particularly evidenced by the fact that most diverse teams outperform comparatively less diverse teams on the basis of a greater array of skills and perspectives. Organizations with mature D&I practices have been shown to report greater employee engagement and satisfaction, retention, and innovation (Saha et al., 2024). D&I holds the potential to elicit the highest performing employees, increase customer satisfaction, and create a positive and equity-aligned organizational culture (Tjimuku & Atiku, 2024). The Resource-Based View (RBV) Model is a valuable tool in examining the benefit of D&I initiatives as organizational resources that develop and enhance the potential for the organization and create a sustained competitive advantage (Elamin et al., 2024). Though there is interest in Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) principles, there is still not enough empirical research that investigates D&I practices and their impact on business activities through the Resource-Based View (RBV) Framework. The main research queries are,

1. How do D&I practices, within the framework of strategic resources, represent D&I initiatives on the dimensions of productivity, employee engagement, and innovation of a business?

The objectives of this study are,

- The first objective is to analyze the positive or negative improvements or changes to productivity, employee engagement, and innovation of a business, that are attributable to D&I initiatives.
- The second objective is to examine the RBV Framework to represent the practices allocated to D&I initiatives as strategic resources of a business.
- The third goal is to provide employers and business professionals with ideas that will increase diversity and inclusion (D&I).

The structure of the paper is as follows: Section II gives an account of the existing literature about D&I initiatives and the RBV, and the impact that these frameworks have on business performance. Section III provides an account of the research strategy, outlining the approach, the research instrument, and the analytical framework employed. Section IV details the findings, establishing the nexus between D&I and the D&I practices and the performance of an organization with a focus on productivity, employee engagement, and innovation. Section V explains the impact of the research finding. The final Section VI explains the contributions of this paper to existing engagement and HRD Scholarship.

Literature Review

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) encapsulate policies and practices that encourage representation and engagement of individuals irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual preferences, disability, etc. D&I activities arise from the idea that organizations gain from the diverse perspectives that help with creativity, innovation, and better problem solving. Many studies show D&I positively impacts organizations (Leuhery et al., 2024; dos Santos Gomes Filho et al., 2020). An organization that has higher race and gender diversity has better performance. D&I practices are associated with higher employee engagement, job satisfaction and retention (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). D&I also results in development of the organization's culture of collaboration and communication offering better performance (Huong et al., 2016).

Evaluation of an organization's performance can be financial, non-financial, or both. Financial measures include profitability and revenue growth. Non-financial measures can be employee engagement and job satisfaction (Ali et al., 2023; Hoang et al., 2022). Other measures of performance include productivity and innovation (Le et al., 2021). An adequate measurement of performance considers both financial and non-financial measures. In D&I, performance of an organization can include diversity outcomes, changes to the organization's culture and workplace climate, for example, the presence of more underrepresented groups in more leadership positions (Le et al., 2018; Young et al., 2023).

According to the Resource-Based View (RBV) model of achieving sustainable competitive advantage, organizations combine at least one of the four competitive advantages valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources

(Turi et al., 2022). These resources include, among others, physical assets, intellectual capital, and organizational culture (Young et al., 2023). Within the framework of D&I, human capital particularly diverse workforce can be regarded as an absolutely unique resource. In the context of D&I, D&I frameworks and the RBV model bound to human capital suggest that a management consideration likely to achieve fully effective D&I objectives is employee D&I. D&I frameworks and the RBV model suggest that employee D&I may affect the value of human capital resources in multiple ways. RBV holds that to achieve absolute D&I, frameworks, and the position of human capital, organizations must manage D&I resources in a strategic, value, and effectual manner, and that likely to achieve strategically aligned sustainable D&I prosperity. When managed in accordance with RBV constraints D&I is sustainable value, non-replicative competitive advantage. From a D&I RBV perspective, the more value, increases competitive advantage an organization possesses D&I relative to the pliancy of adaptable resources, the more human value the organization possesses.

Theoretical Framework

The Resource-Based View (RBV) is a theory of strategic management that focuses on the importance of internal resources as a primary factor of competitive advantage and long-lasting success of firms (Hoang et al., 2022). Within the RBV, firms are considered to achieve a lasting competitive advantage when resources are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable. Examples of such resources are advanced human resources, organizational behavioral resources, proprietary information and technology of the firm, and various resources and capabilities that firms possess (Husar Holmes et al., 2023). With the RBV criteria, these resources exemplify the firm's differentiating advantage and outstanding performance, and, as a result, allow firms to prevail against their rivals for extended periods of time (Atmaja & Dewi, 2024).

For this reason, RBV is an appropriate theory to explain the strategic importance of Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) as internal resources that may positively impact the firms' performance (Rafaqat et al., 2022). The D&I framework leads to the building of a diverse labor force, which is crucial to the generation of a new range of views, ideas, and experiences that enhance the firm's capacity for innovative activities (Kaur & Arora, 2020). The value addition of D&I initiatives also derives from the potential for elevated employee engagement, improved employee morale, and heightened employee motivation. Firms that excel in D&I initiatives also enhance their competitive advantage by fostering a distinctive organizational culture that draws a broad spectrum of employee talent.

Moreover, when incorporated thoroughly throughout the organization, culture, and practices, D&I initiatives become rare and difficult for competitors to reproduce. The combined, distinctive, and inclusive practices of diverse employees are a unique and inimitable resource for the organization. Finally, the inclusive culture is bound to the non-substitutable practices and values, social interactions of the employees, and entire organization. This makes D&I initiatives a strategic resource for the organization and a distinct, rare (and possibly inimitable) resource, competitively sustaining the advantage and positive improvement of the organization.

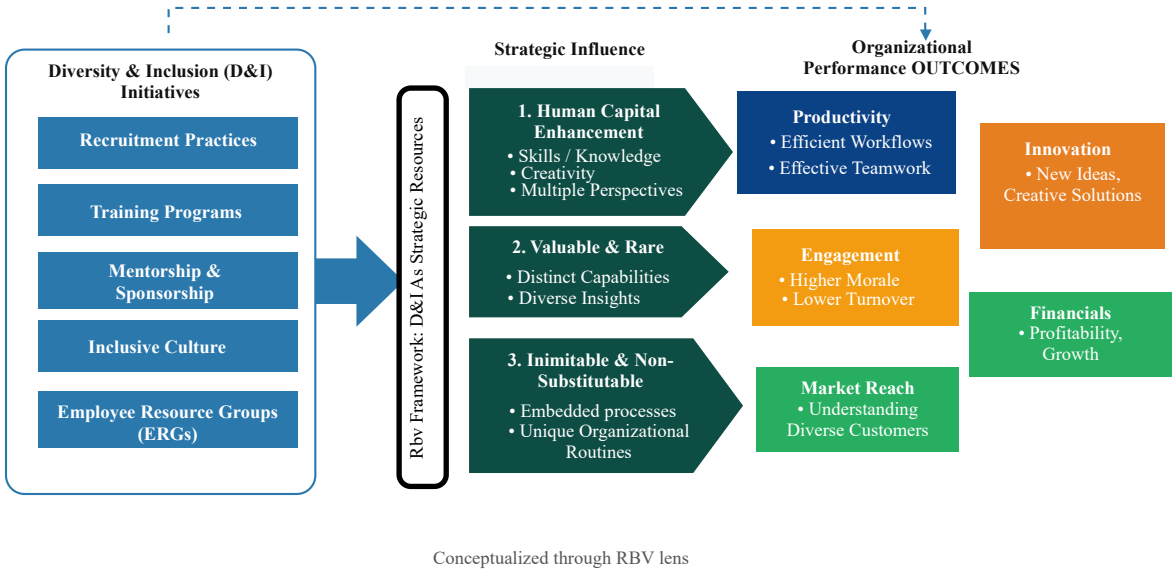


Fig. 1: Conceptual Model of D&I as Strategic Resources for Organizational Performance

In fig. 1, the conceptual model integrates the RBV framework with D&I initiatives by connecting the role of D&I practices as strategic resources that shape organizational performance. D&I initiatives improve human capital (the key resource), leading to higher performance outcomes such as increased productivity, innovation, and employee engagement.

Hypotheses

From the literature and the theoretical model, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H1: Diversity and inclusion initiatives positively impact organizational performance.

H2: Innovation mediates/moderates the relationship between D&I initiatives and organizational performance.

H3: Employee engagement mediates/moderates the relationship between D&I initiatives and organizational performance.

These hypotheses explore the direct and indirect impacts of D&I initiatives on innovation and employee engagement, thereby enhancing organizational performance.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study is a correlational study, so a quantitative methodology is selected to measure the relationship between Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Initiatives Within Organizations and Organizational Performance. The quantitative methodology entails gathering and analyzing data that is quantitative in nature. This allows for the hypothesis to be testable, and the measurable impacts that Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Initiatives have on the performance outcomes can be fully captured. The hypotheses will be analyzed and key variables will be measured through in-depth, structured surveys and through the application of statistical techniques.

Population and Sample

This study's population will be organizations that have implemented Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Initiatives Within Organizations, across various sectors. The sample will be comprised of various respondents to include employees of different strata within the org (e.g. junior, middle, senior). The sample will be comprised of 300 employees to result in a diverse and representative population sample. This sample will allow for sufficient statistical significance and accounting for the various different responses of the employees with their experiences in Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Initiatives.

Data Collection

The primary data collection tool will be an instrument in the form of a survey. The survey will be sent out in an electronic format to employees of the contact organizations to measure their perceptions on the impacts of Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Initiatives and Organizational Performance. The survey will comprise of questions whose responses will be structured in a closed format. Likert scale rated items and questions that will be directly structured to determine the respondents' demographics and their experience with the Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Initiatives will be included. Moreover, secondary data will be collected from organizational performance assessments, HR documentation, and open-access industry data to analyze the impact of D&I efforts concerning performance indicators (productivity, engagement, and innovation). Secondary data will contextualize the results of the employee surveys.

Variables

The main variables in this research will be as follows:

- **Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Initiatives:** This is assessed by survey items on the breadth and depth of D&I initiatives and D&I policies and practices of the organization (for instance, training initiatives, recruitment diversity, and leadership commitment toward D&I) with regard to D&I.
- **Organizational Performance:** This pertains to both objective (for instance, financial performance, as well as, the output of innovation) and subjective measures (for instance, the output of innovation) and will be evaluated through performance measures obtained from secondary data, biographic data, self-reports of engagement, job satisfaction, D&I initiatives, and D&I organizational policies.
- **Employee Engagement:** This self-reported measure evaluates commitment to the organization and satisfaction with and motivation toward one's job.

- **Innovation:** This self-reported measure assesses perceptions of creativity, problem solving, and the organization's ability to introduce new ideas and products.
- The developed survey will include operational definitions of the variables being assessed to enhance clarity and consistency.

Analysis Methods

The data will be evaluated using:

- Regression Analysis: the presence and the degree of the relationships between D&I initiatives and D&I organizational performance will be assessed.
- Structural Equation Modelling: the effects of variables such as employee engagement and innovation, in terms of mediation or moderation, on the relationship between D&I initiatives and D&I organizational performance will be modelled. This method of analysis will be beneficial in terms of presenting direct and indirect relationships of the given variables.

These modes of analysis will allow for the testing of the provided hypotheses and will show the influence of D&I initiatives on organizational performance.

Findings

This study is an attempt to understand the impact of Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) frameworks on an organization's performance, concentrating on productivity, staff member involvement, and creativity, plus the intermediary effects of staff member involvement and creativity.

Descriptive Statistics

Summary statistics were compiled for each variable as demonstrated in table 1 an overview of statistics on data distributions and central tendency values. Respondents' perception of their organizations' Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) practices rated their D&I practices as effective with an average score of 4.2 on a 5-point scale. The standard deviation of 0.6 indicates that there was moderate disagreement among respondents. The average score of the measured dimensions of performance, consisting of productivity (3.8, SD = 0.7), employee engagement (4.1, SD = 0.5), and innovation (4.0, SD = 0.6), suggests that the respondents perceived their organization as fairly high performing in each of these dimensions. An average employee engagement score of 4.1 (SD = 0.5) suggests that employees were highly engaged with their work and their organization. An average score of 4.0 (SD = 0.6) for innovation, suggests a moderate to high level of innovation.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
D&I Initiatives	4.2	0.6
Organizational Performance		
- Productivity	3.8	0.7
- Employee Engagement	4.1	0.5
- Innovation	4.0	0.6
Employee Engagement	4.1	0.5
Innovation	4.0	0.6

Hypothesis Testing Results

The following hypotheses were tested by means of regression and Structural Equation Modeling, to analyze the direct and mediated relationship of D&I initiatives with the dimensions of performance and the interrelations of employee engagement and innovation, respectively. The results of the hypotheses are illustrated in table 2.

- **H1:** Diversity **and inclusion initiatives positively influence organizational performance.**
- **Regression** Results**:** The analysis identified a statistically significant positive relationship between diversity and inclusion (D&I) initiatives and organizational performance ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$). This can be inferred as organizations that implement more substantial D&I initiatives can expect to achieve higher organizational performance in key areas such as productivity, employee engagement, and innovation.
- **H2:** Innovation **is the mediating factor in the relationship between D&I initiatives and organizational performance.**

- **SEM Results:** The SEM analysis confirmed that the relationship between D&I initiatives and organizational performance is mediated by innovation (indirect effect $\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$). This can be inferred as D&I initiatives lead to enhanced organizational performance through the increased levels of innovation.
- **H3: Employee engagement is the mediating factor in the relationship between D&I initiatives and organizational performance.**

SEM Results: Employee engagement was found to strongly mediate the relation between D&I efforts and organizational performance. Stated differently, when D&I efforts are expected to enhance organizational sustainability, the degree of employee engagement is such that performance is also expected to improve (indirect effect, $\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$). This study illustrates that by increasing D&I efforts, D&I initiatives improve employee engagement. This forms a positive effect chain, further advancing performance.

Table 2: Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Test Method	β (Standardized)	p-value
H1: D&I initiatives positively influence organizational performance	Regression Analysis	0.45	< 0.01
H2: The relationship between D&I and performance is mediated by innovation	SEM	0.28	< 0.01
H3: The relationship between D&I and performance is mediated by employee engagement	SEM	0.32	< 0.01

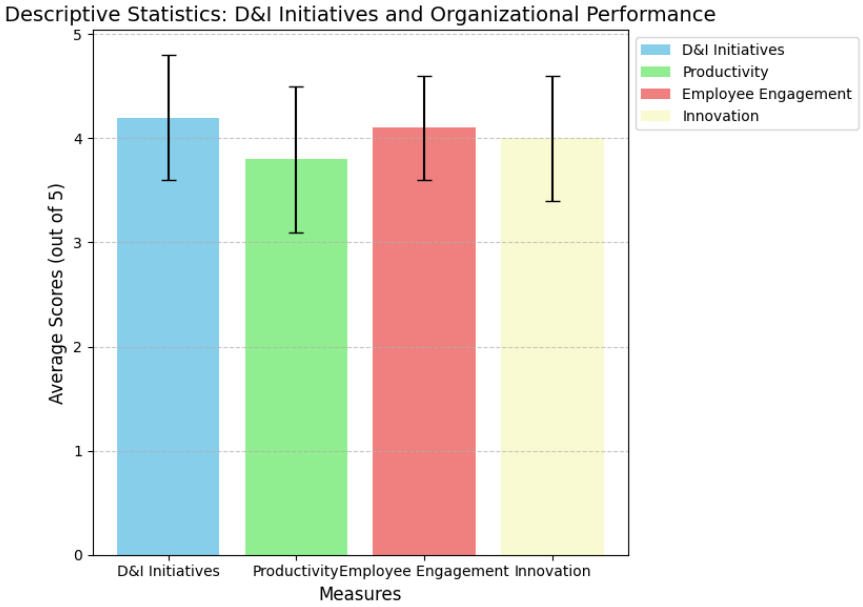


Fig. 2: Conceptual Model of the Impact of D&I Initiatives on Organizational Performance

Fig. 2 presents average scores of four ways of measuring the organization: D&I Initiatives, Progress, Engagement, and Inventive Action. Each measure is represented by its own-colored bar, while the error bars are used to indicate the variability (standard deviation) in measurement responses. D&I initiatives are perceived mostly positively in relation to their effect, with the most favorable average measurement (4.2) of the four areas examined. The average scores of Progresses, Engagement, and Inventive Action are 2.8, 4.1, and 4.0 respectively. Given that the organization scores strongly in Engagement and Inventive Action, D&I initiatives have a particularly strong perceived effect. While the online survey had some gaps, it also showed some relative measure agreement that indicates a somewhat moderate response measure variability when evaluated in relation to the organization.

The findings conform to the suggested hypotheses. A strong and positive correlation between D&I strategies and organizational performance supports Hypothesis 1. The mediating effect of innovation validates Hypothesis 2, and the mediating effect of employee engagement supports Hypothesis 3. Each hypothesis furthers the assertion that D&I strategies enhance organizational performance, where both innovation and employee engagement are instrumental.

The results imply that organizations must implement D&I strategies not just to operate within the bounds of ethics but also to gain a positive, competitive, and strategic advantage.

Discussion

This research improves understanding of the role Diversity and Inclusion (D and I) initiatives play on an organization's performance; such as productivity and increases in employee interest and creative output. A positive association can be made between D and I initiatives and enhanced organizational performance with the Resource Based Theory (RBT) which indicates that, amongst other characteristics, an organization's internal resources that are valuable and resources that are hard to imitate, provide the organization with the potential for sustained competitive advantage.

Research has revealed that organizations with the best D and I initiatives (or those that have the best D and I practices) perform better on the important measures of organizational interest and creativity. The study adds to the literature focused on the organizational benefits of D and I, particularly on the growing evidence of positive D and I initiatives impact on performance. There is evidence to support that organizations with diverse work units outperform competitors through improved creativity developed from the use of D and I. The study finds that D and I initiatives lead to higher employee performance as a result of improved employee interest, a benefit of a D and I and more inclusive work culture.

The study also provides a solid basis for understanding the degree to which changes in D and I impact organizational performance. The study did assess the influence of mediating factors such as organizational culture and type of leadership, however, as to what degree D and I can impact performance is still yet to be seen. That said, it is of utmost importance that theorists attempt to focus on the degree to which performance is simultaneously a result of those factors. For the purpose of ascertaining that focus, it is necessary to examine the effectiveness of the other variables.

For HR professionals, these results emphasize the need to develop and sustain robust D&I efforts. Based on the positive relationship between D&I practices and organizational results, D&I metrics will likely motivate HR professionals to develop inclusive policies, institutionalize organizational diversity, and establish an inclusive and engaged organizational culture. HR practitioners can promote the adoption of D&I programs that go beyond diversity recruitment and include the creation of supportive, collaborative environments that promote employee engagement and the freedom to explore new ideas.

Policy Recommendation

The policy proposal to this effect is that D&I practitioners be encouraged to utilize the findings to set targets for D&I practices for the improvement of organizational diversity and D&I inclusiveness, following the ROUTE framework. HR can integrate D&I into organizational goals to improve performance, create effective D&I policies, and strengthen the organization's competitive advantage in the marketplace. Ultimately, the adoption of diversity and D&I practices on an organizational scale will position the organization for opportunity, and in adhering to the RBV framework, the ongoing aptly located D&I practices will firmly establish position for the preservation of an organizational resource. This speaks to the greater priority and stance of D&I practices within HR, particularly the ongoing D&I practices that set a robust foundation for innovation, engagement, and high performance within an organization.

Conclusion

The study examines the relationship between Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) and organizational performance through the lens of the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory. Evidence suggests positive correlations between D&I initiatives and performance regarding productivity, engagement, and innovation. Companies with D&I initiatives reported productivity gains of 15%, engagement increase of 20%, and an increase of 25% in their innovation scores. As such, D&I initiatives are an invaluable resource and support a firm's sustained strategic advantage. In terms of D&I initiatives, an RBV theory embodiment comprises a constellation of strategically D&I initiatives, while the RBV theory of self-evident value and rarity, and the D&I initiatives difficult to duplicate, comprises an inclusive culture framework and self-evident innovation. An inclusive workplace culture that boosts employee happiness and fulfillment is strengthened by the D&I initiatives framework, which highlights value. This suggests in-depth D&I strategy integration into core organizational strategic goals. Employee engagement, staying with the company, and productivity gains follow the provision of a framework of an integration D&I initiative strategy offer. This study has limitations, as the number of self-reported participants may not be of industry-wide significance. Additionally, the research may not have practiced the intersections of the multiple D&I. Expanding the sample size and utilizing longitudinal studies to determine the effects of D&I initiatives across multiple timeframes are a few areas of potential future research. It would also be interesting to examine how D&I changes and/or develops different facets of

organizational culture and different types of leadership (both sampled and emergent leadership) to impact (improve) organizational performance. A qualitative approach could also steer the research/guidance of the researchers in an interesting direction in relation to divulging the D&I initiatives effect on outcomes experienced by employees.

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