

# Effectiveness of Diversity Training Initiatives in Fostering Inclusive Workplaces

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## Abstract

A key component of contemporary organisations is workplace inclusion, which reflects how much all employees feel appreciated, respected, and actively engaged in the workplace. The effectiveness of diversity training initiatives in fostering inclusiveness in the workplace is investigated in this study. Evidence from research shows that diversity training initiatives improve workers' knowledge, attitudes, and actions towards inclusion and diversity. The results show that after the training, participants' attitudes as well as willingness to participate in inclusive behaviours significantly improved. Leadership buy-in and a diverse-welcome culture are two organisational variables that the study highlights as critical to the success of these programs. Essential components for success include organisational dedication to diversity training, continuous reinforcement, and incorporation of diversity concepts into everyday practices. The study goes on to say that new training formats, like virtual reality courses and other immersive experiences, should be seriously considered because of the potential for longer-term, more significant impacts on diversity and inclusion in the workplace. The results indicate that diversity training programs can help make the workplace more inclusive, but that they should only be part of a larger approach that also includes leadership's buy-in, ongoing support, and an inclusive culture.

**Keywords:** *Workplace, diversity training, inclusive, organisation, effectiveness.*

## Introduction

A key component of contemporary organisations is workplace inclusion, which reflects how much all employees feel appreciated, respected, and actively engaged in the workplace. It has garnered a lot of attention in both theory and practice all around the world, and it covers a lot of ground, encompassing diversity, equity, and belonging. Because of its very diversified workforce, the United States has made workplace inclusion a priority (Leca & Vrânceanu, 2014). In the United States, for example, one study (Leca & Vrânceanu, 2014) found more inclusive organisations had more engaged and productive employees. All the more reason to foster a workplace where people from different walks of life can feel welcome and valued.

The establishment of a welcoming and diverse workplace is a crucial component of many companies' long-term objectives. Businesses use a range of aggressive techniques and resources to create an inclusive atmosphere, but the aim of inclusion remains consistent across the corporate realm. Companies that take diversity and inclusion seriously in the workplace may provide cultural diversity training or organise mandatory lectures on the topic (Cunningham, 2023). On the other side, companies who aren't very proactive about diversity in the workplace may "tip toe" around potentially contentious conversations on diversity by merely inserting a statement on the topic in employee handbooks. While the majority of companies probably lie somewhere in the middle, how a company handles diversity and inclusion matters greatly for the morale of the whole company and the happiness of its workers (Cunningham, 2023).

The purpose of diversity training programs is to inform managers and staff on how to foster an inclusive and equitable work environment. Generally speaking, the goals of these programs are to raise people's level of consciousness, encourage better understanding, and model acceptable conduct towards people of other origins (Derven, 2014; Shah et al., 2022). Adapting to shifting dynamics in the workplace and societal demands, the idea of training on diversity has developed through time. To foster a more inclusive and equitable work environment for all employees, diversity training is essential within the framework of workplace inclusion. Diversity training programs have an emphasis on educating participants about the many facets of diversity. Among these categories are, but are not limited to, age, gender, handicap, orientation towards sexuality, religion, and race (Hamdani & Buckley, 2011). Employees gain an appreciation for diversity within the workplace as a result of these programs' emphasis on cultural competence. Dobbin and Kalev in 2016 pointed out that being conscious of one's own prejudices and assumptions is the first step towards creating a more inclusive atmosphere.

Diversity training programs frequently incorporate elements that teach participants to be more inclusive in their daily lives, in addition to raising general knowledge of the importance of diversity. Training sessions could, for instance, centre on methods of expression that encourage tolerance and acceptance among employees from different cultural origins (Yan et al., 2024). Programs that give specific tactics for inclusive behaviour are more successful in encouraging inclusion in the workplace, according to prior research (Findler et al., 2007; Hamdani & Buckley, 2011; Sanders, 2017) which emphasises the significance of developing skills in diversity training. In order to keep participants actively involved, diversity training programs frequently use case studies and interactive exercises. By giving trainees opportunities to put what they've learnt into practice in authentic contexts, experiential learning methods can boost training efficacy. Diversity training activities, such as role-playing, can help participants develop the empathy and perspective-taking skills necessary to build an inclusive work environment, according to a study (Urbancová et al., 2020).

The compatibility of diversity training initiatives with the aims and principles of the organisation is another important consideration. These initiatives are inclined to have a long-term difference to company culture when they are part of the larger organization's goal. Leaders' active participation in diversity training conveys a strong message to staff about the company's values, according to earlier research (Stoermer et al., 2016; Lussier & Hendon, 2017) that highlights the significance of organisational dedication to diversity and inclusion. In addition, evaluation and follow-up procedures are crucial to diversity training programs' efficacy. By monitoring results and collecting participant input, organisations may pinpoint problem areas and implement fixes. Maintaining the usefulness and applicability of diversity training relies heavily on this cycle of ongoing development (Cunningham, 2023). Organisations can gauge diversity training's impact on inclusion indicators like employee happiness and retention through continuous review.

Diversity training initiatives can also take many forms, from online modules to face-to-face seminars. As a result of technological developments, many companies are relying on online learning platforms to provide training to employees who are located in different locations (Leca & Vrânceanu, 2014). Because of this adaptability, more people can take part, and it's easier for them to access. When properly designed with interactive elements and multimedia information, virtual training on diversity can be as efficient as traditional in-person techniques. It is critical to acknowledge the limits of diversity training initiatives notwithstanding their potential benefits. There is some evidence that diversity training on its own won't boost workplace inclusion much unless paired with broader policy and practice shifts (Sanders, 2017). This emphasises the need for an all-encompassing strategy that considers both individual values and institutional frameworks.

More broadly, inclusionary ideas have grown into diversity training itself. Modern methods place a premium on making sure every employee feels like they belong, in contrast to earlier programs that were more concerned with highlighting unique differences. The new trend in training is to focus on creating inclusive cultures where everyone feels appreciated and respected, rather than just addressing superficial diversity (Turnbull et al., 2011). By raising consciousness, cultivating competence, harmonising with company principles, and making use of reliable assessment tools, diversity training programs significantly contribute to inclusive workplaces. A more inclusive work environment can be achieved through the implementation of these programs by incorporating training with organisational goals, facilitating experiential learning, and adjusting to new technology (Leca & Vrânceanu, 2014; Urbancová et al., 2020). Recognising diversity training as an isolated tactic in the larger effort to foster an inclusive workplace is crucial. Other important components in creating inclusive environments that last include organisational buy-in, systemic improvements, and continuous assessment.

## Review of Literature

**Selenko et al. (2017)** examined job insecurity from a social identity approach. The social identity as a working person was endangered by job uncertainty. It affected overall well-being and work performance. A three-wave poll of 377 British workers supported this view. High-insecurity workers indicated a lower social identification as employed people. Time and reverse causality tests showed the impact was stable. Social identity as a working individual also affected welfare and in-role performance at work and mitigated the impact of job insecurity over time. Social identity as a working individual did not predict organisational proactivity. The findings showed that social identification as an employed person affects job insecurity alongside its impact. This perspective showed how job instability affects individuals and groups and gave a new way to link employment to well-being, conduct, and attitudes.

**Omar & Mahmood (2020)** analysed that several parts of the organization's performance were improved through training and development. The researchers set out to find out how training and development affected business outcomes. The research looked at how company culture mediated the connection between development and training and success in the workplace. Inferential and descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data. The study's assumptions were tested using the Smart Partial Least Squares (SmartPLS) version 4.3 and IBM Statistical Package used in the Social Sciences (IBM-SPSS) version 3. A total of 219 courier service personnel from Malaysia participated in the study's survey. Training and development were found to have a favourable correlation with organisational success, according to the study's findings. In addition, the results showed that the connection between development and training and organisational performance was mediated by organisational culture. In light of this, businesses regularly invested in their workers' professional growth through a variety of training programs, both official and informal, and pushed their staff to fully embrace the company's core values and culture. In order to fortify and enhance the organization's performance, they fostered the fundamental principles of its culture among workers.

**Croitoru et al. (2022)** analysed that the global stiffening of COVID-19 rules forced organisations to promote more diversity, revealing corporate cultures that fostered communication, creativity, and high yield results, which garnered top personnel. This study investigated data from studies on organisations' diversity approach and the necessary policies, emphasising on motivation, creativity and innovation, leadership, and societal responsibility. Each component affected workplace diversity, ranging from 3.33 in motivation to 4.00 for innovation/creativity, leadership, and social responsibility, and 3.71 for societal responsibility.

**Royall et al. (2022)** examined how firms tackled diversity training and its effectiveness in creating an inclusive workplace. Resistance to diversity training programs hampered workplace inclusion attempts. The researchers proposed a modern approach to workplace diversity training to create an inclusive

atmosphere by defining inclusion and distinguishing between diversity and inclusion. Using theoretical foundations for workplace development and training, organisational culture, and diversity training program research, the article developed a conceptual model for an inclusive workplace. This model showed the reciprocal relationship between the training in diversity and an inclusive corporate culture that included adaptation, engagement, mission, and consistency.

**Oloo, M. (2023)** examined how a big multinational company's diversity training initiatives fared in terms of improving inclusion in the workplace. The goal was to find out how the recently introduced diversity training program affected the way workers felt and acted in relation to diversity. The researchers used a mixed-methods strategy, collecting quantitative data from pre- and post-training surveys and qualitative information from focus groups. The results showed that after the training, employees' awareness and comprehension of diversity issues significantly improved. Yet, the study also highlighted the importance of consistently reinforcing and incorporating diversity values into everyday routines. Leadership should set an example of inclusive behaviour, hold frequent refresher workshops, and incorporate diversity objectives into performance evaluations.

**Alabi & Mahmuda (2024)** examined bias training and fair hiring methods in diversity and inclusivity. A more diverse and inclusive workplace was described in the general, along with the difficulties organisations faced and how training on bias and fair hiring assisted. How these methods effect the well-being of workers, organisational effectiveness, and commercial success was also explored. Critically assessing literature, studies of cases, and empirical evidence, the article analysed bias education and equitable hiring techniques and advised further research and organisational reforms. For bias reduction and diversity, companies launched groups of staff resources, unconscious prejudice training, as well as broad-scale diversity efforts. These tactics' research deficiencies must also be considered. This study underlined that firms must overcome biases in hiring, keeping, and advancing diverse people.

**Malek et al. (2024)** evaluated the organisational characteristics and global product development performance (GPDP) along with how global innovation culture mitigates it. These organisational factors were innovations in technology, team creativity, dynamical capacities, and competitive edge. The hypothesis was that these attributes increased GDP. 480 survey responses were evaluated using SEM in addition to SMART-PLS 3. The findings revealed that GPD success is significantly influenced by organisational variables and global innovation culture. Balanced culture and other variables increased organisational interaction and worldwide product development. This improved efficacy and global development of products.

## Research Gap

Although the studies described above offer significant insights into how diversity training programs might enhance workplace inclusion, there are still certain gaps in the data that need to be filled. One important area to address is the dearth of studies that examine how diversity training impacts participants over the long run. There has been some research (Derven, 2014; Urbancová et al., 2020; Cunningham, 2023) on the short-term effects of training programs, but much less on the long-term effects.

Second, the best ways to teach diversity do not yet have a well-defined structure or methodology for implementation. Additional comparative study is required to ascertain the most successful approaches for various organisational contexts, while some studies (Derven, 2014; Oloo, 2023; Alabi & Mahmuda, 2024) did touch on alternative delivery modes like online training and intensive virtual reality experiences. Further investigation into training program content might reveal which aspects have the most impact on fostering a more inclusive work environment. In order to determine which parts of training, modules are most effective, this could necessitate experimental designs.

Although there has been a lot of progress in filling in the gaps in our knowledge on how diversity training programs affect inclusion in the workplace, there are still a number of questions that need answering. Among these factors are the following: the impact of leadership and culture on training, the best ways to offer it, and how to evaluate its content. Filling these gaps will help diversity programs perform better and will also lead to more inclusive workplaces by providing evidence-based approaches.

## **Objective of the Study**

The research set out to determine whether diversity training programs were successful in fostering more inclusive work environments.

## **Methodology**

In order to gain a comprehensive grasp of the present knowledge in the topic, the study involved scanning a wide variety of scholarly materials, such as books, articles in national and international journals, and other pertinent publications. Researchers shape the study framework by methodically reviewing the literature to learn about important theories, procedures, results, and gaps in the current body of knowledge.

## **Findings & Discussions**

Many significant findings were drawn from the study. To start, research shows that diversity training initiatives help workers become more knowledgeable about diversity issues and how to address them in the workplace. The training programs had a profound effect on the participants' views towards diversity, as they became more receptive to different points of view and more eager to participate in inclusive actions (Yan et al., 2024). The study also noted that organisational characteristics, like inclusive culture and support from leadership, are important for these programs to be successful. Training participants were more invested in the material and more inclined to incorporate inclusive practices into their work lives when they worked for departments that had strong leadership backing and a work environment that valued diversity (Derven, 2014; Cunningham, 2023).

The research shows that diversity training initiatives improve workers' understanding of diversity and inclusion as well as their attitudes and actions in this area. The findings show that after receiving training, individuals have a far better grasp of diversity concerns and are more likely to participate in inclusive behaviours (Sanders, 2017). This provides more evidence that diversity training is useful for companies who want to foster more welcoming workplaces. Second, one of the most important factors in making diversity training programs as effective as possible is the role of organisational culture and support. The significance of a positive work environment in sustaining the training's ideas and messages was emphasised by the research (Turnbull et al., 2011). Workers are more inclined to participate in and put into practice what they learn in training if they believe their employer respects and promotes diversity and inclusion (Royall et al., 2022).

Taken together, the findings indicate that diversity training programs have the potential to enhance workplace inclusion, but that the success of such programs is heavily dependent on the specifics of the organization's setting and the systems put in place to support them. To that end, businesses that care about creating a welcoming workplace for all employees should pay for diversity training and watch how their executives' model inclusive practices.

## **Conclusion**

It can be concluded that the study contributes to the expanding canon of work on Social Identity Theory. Examining the effects of diversity training programs on employees' sense of belonging to inclusive organisational goals, the study lends credence to the theory's claims about group dynamics and intergroup relations. It helps us understand the ways social identity processes function in organisational

settings by shedding light on how these programs can affect staff members' perspectives and actions about diversity. Second, the research adds to the body of knowledge by providing actionable advice to businesses who want to increase diversity training's impact on workplace inclusion. The findings stress the need to consistently emphasise and incorporate diversity concepts into routine activities. By utilising this knowledge, organisations may create training programs that not only raise awareness but also encourage employees to modify their behaviour and attitudes for the better. Leadership, the report argues, is crucial in fostering an inclusive culture, and leaders should do more than just talk the talk when it comes to diversity programs.

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