



DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION: PERSPECTIVES FROM HR PROFESSIONALS IN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

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Abstract: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives are essential for fostering equitable workplaces, especially in traditionally male-dominated sectors like manufacturing. This study examines the perceptions of HR professionals from manufacturing firms in Bangalore and Chennai, focusing on the strategies, challenges, and impacts of DEI implementation. Using a descriptive research design, in-depth interviews were conducted with six HR professionals (4 females, 2 males). Reflexive thematic analysis revealed that DEI initiatives, such as inclusive recruitment, unbiased performance management, and cultural competency training, significantly enhance employee engagement, retention, and organizational innovation. Findings indicate that although DEI positively influences workplace equity and productivity, challenges like managerial resistance, low participation, and sustainability hinder its implementation. Key strategies, including leadership training and inclusive policies, address these obstacles, fostering gradual cultural adaptation. The study underscores the need for structural integration of DEI into HR functions and organizational practices to achieve sustained impact. Future research should explore DEI across diverse sectors and consider longitudinal approaches to assess its long-term effects..

Keywords: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Manufacturing Industry, HR Strategies, Employee Engagement, Organizational Innovation.

INTRODUCTION:

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) have emerged as key priorities in organizational strategies across industries, including the traditionally male-dominated manufacturing sector. With globalization, evolving labor markets, and shifting societal expectations, the manufacturing industry is increasingly recognizing the need for inclusive workspaces that support varied identities, backgrounds, and perspectives. DEI initiatives aim to create equitable opportunities, promote belonging, and empower employees to contribute meaningfully to organizational growth.

Diversity encompasses the presence of differences—such as gender, ethnicity, skills, and experiences—while equity ensures fair treatment and access to opportunities. Inclusion refers to the creation of environments where all individuals feel valued and involved. Research highlights that inclusive workplaces result in higher employee engagement, retention, and innovation. For instance, McKinsey's 2020 report noted that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams were 25% more likely to outperform their peers financially.

Despite these benefits, DEI implementation in manufacturing remains challenging. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2020) reported that women represent only 29% of the global manufacturing workforce, with ethnic diversity also limited. While IT and service sectors have made notable DEI progress, manufacturing lags behind due to systemic barriers, cultural resistance, and a lack of tailored DEI frameworks.

India's vast cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity adds another layer of complexity, necessitating context-specific approaches. However, studies on DEI in the Indian manufacturing sector remain limited, especially from the perspective of HR professionals who play a crucial role in shaping inclusive practices. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring the perceptions, strategies, and challenges faced by HR professionals in Bangalore and Chennai.

NEED OF THE STUDY:

The manufacturing sector in India, while being a critical contributor to the economy, has traditionally been slow in embracing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices. As global markets and workforce demographics evolve, organizations are under increasing pressure to build inclusive environments that reflect broader social values. DEI initiatives not only enhance employee morale and productivity but also contribute to innovation and long-term organizational success. However, the implementation of these initiatives in the Indian manufacturing sector remains limited and under-researched.

There is a pressing need to explore how HR professionals in manufacturing industries perceive and implement DEI strategies, particularly in urban industrial hubs like Bangalore and Chennai. These professionals play a vital role in policy formulation, employee engagement, and cultural transformation, yet their insights are often overlooked in academic and industry research. Understanding their perspectives can help identify existing challenges, successful practices, and areas for improvement in DEI efforts.

This study aims to bridge the knowledge gap by capturing the lived experiences and strategic approaches of HR managers toward DEI in the manufacturing context. The findings will be valuable for policy-makers, HR practitioners, and corporate leaders aiming to cultivate inclusive and equitable workplaces in one of India's most significant industrial sectors.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Descriptive research design has been adopted here to study the DEI, perspectives from HR professionals. In Depth interview was done to collect data. The target population of this study were HR professionals from the manufacturing sector. The data is collected by approaching people individually through personal connections and through referrals via LinkedIn. The participants were informed and consents were collected from them as a part of in depth interviews. Participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences as it is a voluntary participation. A Structured questionnaire was used to collect demographic data, which was followed by in depth interview, one on one interview and online interviews to collect data from HR professionals.

Tools and Measures

The main tool used for collecting data was a semi- structured interview guide created to gather in-depth perspectives from participants regarding DEI initiatives in the manufacturing sector. The guide was created by carefully examining literature on DEI initiatives in the manufacturing sector, focusing on studies done in these settings. The interview guide had probes and prompts to facilitate thorough examination of important topics, along with open-ended questions for participants to describe their experiences in their own words.

Population and Sample

The study involves purposive sampling (Non-probability sampling) of a diverse range of manufacturing industries. A total of 6 HR professionals had been selected to participate in the study, out of which 4 were female HR professionals and 2 were male HR professionals. HR professionals from the manufacturing sector who are working full- time and with a minimum of 1 year experience are included, excluding HR professionals from other sectors.

- **Inclusion Criteria** - HR managers holding managerial positions within the HR department with a minimum of 1 years' experience. The Organization with DEI practices and policies, located within Bangalore and Chennai were included in the study.
- **Exclusion Criteria** - The study excludes HR trainees, interns, and temporary workers in the HR field. Organizations located outside of Bangalore and Chennai, as well as those not practicing DEI initiatives, are also excluded. Start-ups and HR managers with less than one year of experience were not included in the study.

Method of Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews- In depth semi-structured interviews are conducted with the HR professionals within the selected organization. Through interviews there was exploration on their experiences, perceptions and insights regarding DEI practices, HR strategies and the overall organizational performance. The nature of open-ended questions helped the participants to express their views freely, which provides rich qualitative data..

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which explains how individuals derive part of their identity from group memberships such as gender, ethnicity, or professional roles. In organizational settings, these identities

influence interactions, inclusion, and access to opportunities. The theory highlights the dynamics of in-groups and out-groups, offering insight into workplace behaviours and biases that impact DEI efforts. By applying this framework, the study explores how HR professionals in the manufacturing sector perceive and manage diversity, and how these perceptions shape inclusive practices within their organizations.

Procedure

After obtaining proper ethical approval for the questionnaires, HR professionals working in different manufacturing sectors were selected using purposive sampling technique. Details of the research were sent with the research objectives and questions, after their confirmation, date and time for the interview was scheduled. This is done through circulating in linkedin and through referrals. Google forms were circulated to them, which consisted of informed consent form, general description of the research was also mentioned along with demographic details capturing Age, gender, educational qualification, Job location and years of experiences. Which was followed by a 40-60 mins interview session either through google meet or one-on one interview. The data collected from the interview are transcribed and data analysis is done to draw required results.

Ethical Consideration

This research gives importance to the ethical handling of every participant. Each participant will receive a comprehensive explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their rights before providing informed consent. Confidentiality and anonymity will be rigorously upheld during the research process, ensuring that participant identities are safeguarded using anonymization methods and secure data storage. Voluntary participation allows participants to withdraw at any time without facing any consequences. Acknowledging the delicate nature of the subject, researchers will interview with compassion and consideration, providing a secure environment for participants to discuss their experiences.

Data Analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis was employed by Braun and Clarke (2006) to analyse the interview data. This method helps identify patterns, themes, and insights, allowing for a thorough knowledge of participants' experiences and perceptions of unfulfilled requirements in DEI context.

The thematic analysis offers a structured yet adaptable approach to analysing qualitative data, facilitating the identification of critical themes across participants' responses.

The process involved the following steps:

- **Familiarization:** The researchers thoroughly reviewed the interview transcripts, reading them multiple times to become acquainted with the data.
- **Initial Coding:** Systematic coding was applied to text segments, labelling key ideas, concepts, or experiences relevant to the research questions.
- **Theme Development:** Codes were grouped into potential themes and sub-themes based on common patterns and meanings.
- **Theme Review and Refinement:** Themes were reviewed in the context of the entire dataset to ensure consistency and accuracy.
- **Theme Definition and Naming:** Each theme was defined and named to represent the core findings.
- **Report Writing:** The results were presented with detailed descriptions, including direct participant quotes to highlight key themes and insights.

Member Checking

To ensure the validity of the findings, a member-checking process was conducted. Preliminary findings were shared with key participants to verify and validate the interpretations (Bryman, 2016). This process helped ensure that the research accurately captured participants' perspectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table-1

Socio- Demographic details of the Participants

Participants	Age	Gender	Education qualification	Job Location	Current Role	Experience
P1	48	Male	Postgraduation	Chennai	Advisor HR	30
P2	27	Female	Postgraduation	Bangalore	Deputy manager- HR	7
P3	21	Female	Postgraduation	Bangalore	Management trainee	6
P4	35	Female	Postgraduation	Chennai	Deputy manager- HR	10
P5	48	Male	Postgraduation	Bangalore	Senior manager-HR	12
P6	28	Female	Postgraduation	Bangalore	Manager- HR	8

Table-1 provides demographic and professional information about six participants involved in the research. The participants vary in age, ranging from 21 to 48 years, with a gender distribution of four females and two males. All participants hold postgraduate qualifications, primarily working in HR-related roles across two major locations: Bangalore and Chennai. The professional roles

represented include Advisor HR, Senior Manager HR, Deputy Manager HR, Manager HR, and a Management Trainee. Experience levels vary significantly, from 2 years to 30 years, reflecting a diverse range of expertise, with younger participants occupying junior roles and those with more experience holding senior positions.

Table-2
Themes and SubThemes

Global themes	Themes	Sub Themes	
1. Structural Integration of DEI	1.1 Inclusive Recruitment and Hiring Techniques	1.1.1 Blind Recruitment	
		1.1.2 Unbiased JD	
		1.1.3 Diverse Sourcing	
		1.1.4 Recruitment Policies	
	1.2 Diverse Training and Development	1.2.1 Cultural competency training	
		1.2.2 Leadership Training	
	1.3 Inclusive performance Management	1.3.1 Performance Criteria	
		1.3.2 Diverse Evaluation patterns	
	1.4 DEI initiatives practiced	1.4.1 Facilities to women	
		1.4.2 Facilities for specially abled	
		1.4.3 DEI Committee	
		1.4.4 Other Initiatives	
	2. Cultural Evolution Towards DEI	2.1 Common challenges faced During DEI implementation	2.1.1 Inadquate support from managers
			2.1.2 Resistance to change
2.1.3 Lack of participation			
2.1.4 Myths and Misconceptions			
2.1.5 Ensuring Sustainability			
2.2 Impact of DEI on organizational Performance		2.2.1 Employee Morale and Engagement	
		2.2.2 Innovation and Problem-Solving	
		2.2.3 Talent Attraction and Retention	
2.3 Policies and Culture Shaping DEI in Organizations		2.3.1 Inclusive Workplace Practices and Policies	
		2.3.2 Nurturing a Culture of Inclusion	

INTERPRETATION

1. Structural Integration of DEI

The theme reflects the systemic and structural embedding of DEI initiatives into core organizational operations in the manufacturing sector. It involves formalizing DEI policies, HR practices and strategies to ensure equity and inclusivity are upheld across the organizational functions. The sub-themes reflect on structural components such as performance management, recruitment, training and Development and formal DEI initiatives. It highlights how organizations operationalize the DEI across various HR functions and ensure its inclusion in core business practices in the manufacturing industry.

1.1 Inclusive recruitment and Hiring practices

In the context of the manufacturing industry, recruitment is the primary structural component which integrates DEI. Implementing an inclusive and unbiased process for attracting, sourcing and hiring candidates from diverse backgrounds. This includes formal recruitment policies that provide equal opportunities for all. This aligns directly with the structural approach of embedding DEI into HR functions.

1.1.1 Blind Recruitment

It aims to Remove identifiable information (Gender, race, age, nationality) that could lead to bias in the hiring process. This directly supports equitable and diverse hiring practices and promotes fairness in candidate selection.

Quotations

“Underrepresented communities and ensuring bias-free hiring practices, such as blind recruitment, where the selection process is based purely on skill and experience”

“We focus on multiple fronts—one key strategy is embedding DEI into our recruitment process. For example, in our campus recruitment drives, we target educational institutions that have a strong gender balance, and we have specific recruitment campaigns aimed at attracting women and individuals from underrepresented communities.”

“Started by diversifying the hiring pool, which meant sourcing candidates from different regions, linguistic backgrounds, and experiences.”

1.1.2 Unbiased job Description

Creating JDs that are inclusive and neutral helps to prevent discrimination in the recruitment process and attracts a diverse pool of employees. Use of neutral languages and avoid exclusionary or gendered teams to appeal to all candidates.

Quotations

“Not mentioning Gender in JD for the role.”

“When preparing JD we ensure that neutral languages are used throughout and gendered teams are avoided.”

1.1.3 Diverse sourcing

The practice of sourcing candidates from various communities, backgrounds and institutions to enhance diversity and inclusion. Actively seeking talents from diverse backgrounds ensures that the recruitment pipelines reflect the organization's commitment to inclusivity.

Quotations

“Comes to campus recruitment. During our recruitment drives, we focus on geographical and gender diversity, ensuring a broad and inclusive hiring process.”

“Gender-neutral recruitment policy. We eliminated gender indicators on resumes during the initial screening process to ensure that biases didn't influence hiring decisions.”

1.1.4 Recruitment policies

Structuring recruitment policies that mandates fairness and inclusivity ensures DEI is systematically embedded in the recruitment process. Formal rules and guidelines that define how the recruitment is conducted to uphold equity and diversity in hiring.

Quotations

“Equal opportunity Policy and Anti-Discrimination Policy, we ensure these policies are practiced and carried throughout the process.”

“Implementing policies, running surveys, and ensuring diversity in recruitment.”

1.2 Diverse Training and Development

In the context of the manufacturing industry, these programs are designed to promote diversity and inclusivity that reflects the structural integration of DEI. Providing targeted training programs that aims to foster cultural competency and inclusivity within the leadership teams and workforce. It reduces unconscious bias which supports long term organizational changes by ensuring employees to foster an inclusive workplace.

1.2.1 Cultural Competency Training

Training employees on cultural understanding and awareness helps foster an inclusive environment where diverse perspectives are valued and respected. Training programs are designed to improve workers' respect and understanding for different practices, customs and culture.

Quotations

“Train managers on inclusivity and unconscious bias. It's about changing the mind-set—making them realize that everyone, regardless of gender, age, or physical ability, can contribute meaningfully to the organization.”

“Learning and Development (L&D) . We pay special attention to the needs of women and differently-abled employees through tailored training and development programs. Sensitization training is also given to avoid cultural barriers. Our goal is to create a pipeline of talent that's ready to take on leadership roles.”

“Our learning and development programs also focus on sensitization and creating awareness among all employees about the importance of DEI.”

1.2.2 Leadership Training

Leaders who are equipped with DEI related skills and knowledge can drive equity and inclusion throughout the organization in the manufacturing industry, making informed decisions and modelling inclusive behaviours.

Quotations

“We provide continuous training and development opportunities for women to ensure they can take on leadership roles.”

“Training programs for leadership and employees at all levels.”

1.3 Inclusive performance management

Integrating DEI into performance management involves opportunities for growth and creating equitable evaluation metrics. This reflects the structural shifts needed to access and reward employees in an unbiased and fair manner, ensuring that diverse talent is promoted and recognized.

1.3.1 Performance criteria

Standardized and objective measures used to assess employee performance, ensures fair evaluation. Establishing unbiased and clear performance criteria ensures that all employees are evaluated based on their contributions and skills and not with their identity.

Quotations

“Performance is evaluated on equitable and fair opportunities given for their team members.”

“No judgements, bias and evaluation done based on their skills and contributions.”

1.3.2 Diverse evaluation Patterns

Evaluation processes that include feedback mechanisms and diverse raters with multiple perspectives refuses bias and provides more comprehensive and balanced assessment of employee performance.

Quotations

“evaluated not only on their job performance but also on how they contribute to fostering an inclusive work culture.”

“Our Performance Management System is designed to recognize and promote diversity. For instance, we give special consideration to women during appraisals by assigning them an “A” grade to help ensure their growth and promotion within the company.”

“Employees and managers were not only evaluated based on their job performance but also on how they contributed to creating an inclusive environment. This reinforced the importance of DEI at every level of the organization.”

1.4 DEI initiatives Practiced

In the context of the manufacturing sector, it encompasses the initiatives and practical strategies that the organization implements to promote DEI initiatives. Where different facilities are given to specially abled and women along with launching mentorship programs, diversity councils for underrepresented groups and updating with HR policies to promote equity are structural measures aimed at including DEI into the organizational framework.

1.4.1 Facilities for women

From the context of the manufacturing sector, organizational provisions specifically designed to support the needs of women workers, by providing appropriate facilities. Including maternity support, creche facilities, flexible working hours. It ensures women are encouraged and supported in the workplace, which fosters gender equity.

Quotations

“We had exclusive forums for women too, such as working women’s forums, where women could discuss their issues and organize programs.”

“Yes, we have some policies that are specifically geared toward promoting DEI. One such policy is our Women’s Allowance, which is designed to support the overall well-being of our women employees. This includes allowances for things like health and fitness, which encourages a healthier lifestyle and work-life balance.”

“special policy that focuses on maternity and childcare benefits to support women in balancing their personal and professional lives.”

“creation of an all-women production line.”

1.4.2 Facilities for specially abled

Services and adaptations that are provided by the manufacturing industry to support employees with disabilities, that reflects organization’s commitment to an equitable and inclusive work environment.

Quotations

“Yes, definitely. Physically challenged employees are given special attention. For instance, we ensure that they are mostly assigned to administrative roles, as working in the plant can be physically demanding. We provide ramps with railings for easy access, lifts in all buildings, and separate washrooms designed specifically for their needs. These accommodations ensure that everyone has equal access and opportunities to work comfortably.”

“differently-abled employees, with facilities like ramps and designated washrooms. We’re proud to have a few differently-abled individuals working with us as well.”

1.4.3 DEI Committee

In the context of the manufacturing industry, a formal group that is responsible for overseeing and guiding DEI initiatives within the organization. It ensures continuous accountability and focus for inclusion and diversity goals.

Quotations

“It ensures that there is a team responsible for overseeing the implementation of DEI initiatives. This committee can monitor progress, identify areas for improvement, and provide feedback to leadership.”

“DEI committee that included representatives from HR, operations, and different departments. This way, everyone had a voice in shaping our policies. We also made sure that the committee met regularly to review our progress and update our DEI goals. It’s important to have a structured approach so that DEI doesn’t just become a side project but a core part of the company’s culture.”

“I also emphasized that the company had a legal obligation to form the committee, as mandated by the government. Once people realize the importance of these initiatives and see the potential benefits, there’s usually less resistance.”

1.4.4 Other initiatives

In the manufacturing industry, these initiatives are designed to promote diversity, inclusion and equity that do not fall under formal and structural policies. DEI focused programs, including employee resource group, mentorship, Pride month celebration that support Diversity Across various dimensions.

Quotations

“quality circles, which bring employees together to collaborate on improvements. These forums include workers from various departments and levels—unskilled workers, skilled workers, executives and everyone.”

“participatory forums, such as production committees, safety committees, and canteen committees. These committees involve employees at all levels, including those from underrepresented groups. That’s how the public sector ensures that all voices are heard, which aligns with the principles of DEI.”

“We also celebrate Pride Month annually. We bring in external speakers to educate our employees about LGBTQ+ issues.”

“We also celebrate DEI Week, which is a dedicated time to focus on inclusion, where we hold leadership talks, mentoring sessions for women, and even health-focused programs like balanced diet sessions specifically for our women employees.”

2. Cultural Evolution Towards DEI

In context with the manufacturing sector, it deals with the transformation in the organizational culture as the principle of DEI becomes deeply embedded in values, relationships, mindsets, daily interactions and workplace norms. The sub themes here focus on the policies, challenges and ongoing shifts in the workplace. It reflects changes in attitudes, mindsets and behaviors within the workforce in the manufacturing sector and leadership towards fostering an inclusive environment.

2.1 Common challenges faced during DEI implementation

In the context of the manufacturing industry, identifying and addressing the difficulties and barriers that are encountered by organizations during the implementation of DEI initiatives. This captures the ongoing efforts to navigate these obstacles as the culture evolves towards greater equity and inclusion.

2.1.1. Inadequate support from managers

Lack of consistent and active support and backing from individuals holding managerial positions to implement and sustain the DEI practices is one important challenge faced in the manufacturing industry. Without strong managerial support, the DEI initiative fails in many aspects.

Quotations

“Some managers were hesitant to recruit more women or people from diverse backgrounds, fearing it would disrupt their teams.”

“Sexual Harassment Committee in my current role at the pharmaceutical company, some of the female employees were reluctant to join because they needed their manager’s permission to attend the meeting. This is a common issue in private sector companies where management often controls every decision, and employees may feel restricted.”

“hiring transgender individuals for blue-collar positions, and the first hurdle was conducting sensitivity training for the managers. Changing mindsets takes time, and it's an ongoing process.”

2.1.2 Resistance to change

The hesitation and unwillingness from the managers and workers to support and embrace DEI initiatives is another challenge that is faced in the manufacturing industry. This is due to fear of change or biases, presenting a barrier to the cultural evolution needed for DEI initiatives.

Quotations

“One of the primary barriers is resistance to change, particularly in a traditionally male-dominated industry like manufacturing.”

“The biggest challenge is educating employees. For instance, when we first introduced Pride Month, many employees were unsure about its significance, this is due to Resistance to change.”

2.1.3 Lack of Participation

Limited involvement from leaders and workers in DEI practices, programs, activities and training. Low participation and engagement in DEI programs weakens their impact in the manufacturing settings.

Quotations

“excluded or think the programs don’t apply to them.”

“The engineering team may have a more collaborative culture, while the finance team is more numbers-driven, so getting everyone to embrace the same level of inclusivity can be tough due to lack of participation.”

2.1.4 Myths and Misconceptions

Misunderstandings or false beliefs about DEI principles and their impact, hinders the effective implementation. It can cause reluctance to participate or support these initiatives, stalling cultural progress in these settings.

Quotations

“hesitant to participate due to misconceptions, and I realized that sensitization programs were essential—not just for the employees, but also for the leadership team.”

“Often skepticism or hesitation when new diversity-focused initiatives are introduced, especially among the more senior workforce.”

“a lot of misconception about hiring people with disabilities, with concerns about productivity or the cost of accommodations.”

2.1.5 Ensuring Sustainability

In the context of the manufacturing industries, the process of maintaining and evolving DEI initiatives are the challenges to have a long- lasting impact. DEI is challenging without resource allocation, revisiting the policies, and continual efforts to maintain its relevance in the manufacturing industries.

Quotations

“Implementing a DEI policy isn’t a one-time task. It requires constant monitoring and revising. We created a scorecard system to track our progress and ensure that the changes we were making were leading to tangible results. This helped us stay accountable and adjust our strategies when needed.”

“DEI is a continuous journey, not a one-time task. Stay persistent, and don’t get discouraged if you face resistance.”

“The challenge is ensuring the long-term sustainability of these initiatives. It’s one thing to implement them, but to ensure they continue to thrive, we need constant engagement and awareness programs.”

2.2 Impact of DEI on Organizational Performance

Understanding how these DEI initiatives influence the key organizational outcomes in manufacturing industries, such as innovation, problem- solving abilities, productivity, employee retention and employee satisfaction.

2.2.1 Employee morale and Engagement

In the manufacturing context, a workplace that promotes DEI has a positive influence on employee satisfaction and engagement that leads to higher productivity and morale.

Quotations

“Employees feel included and valued, their productivity naturally increases.”

“Employees who feel included and valued are more engaged, which naturally leads to better performance.”

“Increased productivity, lower absenteeism, and a stronger sense of belonging across the board due to employee engagement.”

2.2.2 Innovation and Problem-solving

Diverse workforce in the manufacturing sector brings varied perspectives, enhancing innovative and creative problem solving, which is the cultural outcome of DEI initiatives. The contribution of diverse perspectives to collaboration, innovation and generation of new ideas are the effective outcomes of DEI.

Quotations

“Diverse teams were more innovative and better at problem-solving, which, in turn, improved productivity.”

“Different perspectives and ideas to the table, which leads to more creative problem-solving and better decision-making.”

“Having a diverse team allows us to approach problems from different perspectives, which leads to more innovative solutions.”

2.2.3 Talent attraction and Retention

Manufacturing industries known for strong DEI practices are more likely to attract and retain the top talents which enhances the overall organizational performance.

Quotations

“Helps in talent retention; employees are less likely to leave the company.”

“Attract top talent from diverse backgrounds.”

“Talent attraction and retention have improved with DEI initiatives.”

“Employees are more likely to stay loyal to the company when they receive equal pay, opportunities, or recognition.”

2.3 Policies and Culture shaping DEI in Organization

From the perspective of manufacturing industries, the role of policies and culture hinders and reinforces the goals of DEI. This examines how equity and inclusivity can be embedded into organizational values and everyday work culture. As new DEI policies are implemented, they start to reshape the cultural landscape of the manufacturing sector. It focuses on the dynamic interplay between Cultural changes and policies.

2.3.1 Inclusive workplace Policies

Workplace policies that foster inclusion are critical for creating a culture where all the workers feel respected and valued. These policies include, anti-discrimination policies, flexible working hours and inclusive decision making.

Quotations

“Equal Opportunity Policy is crucial for ensuring a fair and inclusive workplace.”

“Implemented policies that ensure differently-abled employees have the resources and facilities they need to work comfortably.”

“Working on formalizing policies for transgender inclusion as part of future DEI goals, aiming to create an environment where transgender individuals can thrive.”

“Key policies include the Equal Opportunity Employment Policy, ensuring all employees have access to the same opportunities for growth and advancement.”

2.3.2 Nurturing a Culture of Inclusion

An inclusive workplace culture goes beyond the policies and it is reflected in leadership styles, daily interactions and broader organizational values which promotes belonging to all employees.

Quotations

“Integrating DEI principles into the broader strategy and ensuring that every department aligns with DEI goals.”

“DEI is not just a policy—it’s a culture that needs to be nurtured over time.”

“Company culture around food is inclusive of all dietary preferences, offering ample vegetarian options.”

DISCUSSION

This research delved into the perspectives of HR professionals from the manufacturing industry on DEI initiatives. The results centered on Structural Integration of DEI and Cultural Evolution towards DEI, provide important information on the practices, strategies used, policies and challenges faced that impacted these initiatives in manufacturing industries.

Structural Integration of DEI

The findings of this study emphasize the systematic integration of DEI into the manufacturing process, focusing on formalized DEI programs, recruitment, and training and development programs. HR professionals emphasize that integrating DEI with core functions such as inclusive recruitment and appropriate job descriptions directly supports the organization’s goal of promoting diversity and equity. Practices such as blind hiring, access to diverse facilities, and the development of fair recruitment policies are foundational to reducing bias and ensuring equal opportunities for all applicants, irrespective of their background As

HR professionals have noted, this policy change extends to performance management systems and ensures unbiased evaluation of employee contributions, which will create a more inclusive environment.

Furthermore, formal DEI programs, such as mentoring programs and programs to support women and differently abled workers, reflect companies' commitment to DEI. By integrating these policy elements, it is not that organization in the manufacturing sector not only addresses existing inequalities but extends DEI services in modern industry. Establish a work environment that celebrates diversity aligned with values and is systematic in every organizational role (Kulik, 2014; Roberson, 2006).

Cultural Evolution Towards DEI

The growth of culture towards DEI is equally important, because this research illustrates how an organizational culture slowly shifts toward more inclusive and equitable conditions in the manufacturing sector. The organizations' leaders and employees highlighted how challenging it was to modify the deep-rooted culture and that opposition in changing it came directly from top management and even at the middle-management level, exhibiting high levels of internalized bias because the culture of the industry is basically a male-breadwinner culture. Major obstacles involved resistance, lack of managerial support, and minimal participation. These demonstrate that it is not possible to develop fully new cultural forms unless these types of obstacles are continually sought after and overcome. However, the pattern of change in organizational culture can be very clearly identified in the way many HR professionals view a leadership training and cultural competency development program in creating inclusive behaviors and attitudes across all levels of an organization.

These policies further include equal opportunity policies, anti-discrimination measures, and facilities to support women and abled workers, thereby shaping a more inclusive workplace culture. Increasing recognition of DEI is also propelled by the growing awareness of its benefitting impact on employee morale, innovation, and talent retention. A manufacturing firm that succeeds in infusing DEI into the culture will bring a lot of long-term benefits because diverse teams foster perspectives that enhance problem-solving and innovation. These findings align with earlier studies, which underscore not only the organizational culture in bringing diversity on board but also the efforts sustained to ensure that DEI becomes part of workplace values (Shore et al., 2009; Nishii, 2013).

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant progress made by HR professionals in the manufacturing industry in embedding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives into the organizational fabric. DEI is becoming structurally integrated into various HR functions such as recruitment, performance management, and training, with an emphasis on equity and inclusion. Practices like blind recruitment, unbiased job descriptions, cultural competency training, and inclusive performance evaluation systems are being adopted to foster diversity and equity. This cultural shift, while addressing challenges such as managerial resistance and sustaining DEI efforts, leads to enhanced employee engagement, innovation, talent retention, and overall organizational performance. However, several limitations must be considered. The small sample size of HR professionals limits the generalizability of the findings across the manufacturing industry, and broader models are required to capture how DEI policies vary. Additionally, the focus on manufacturing may not reflect DEI challenges in other industries, and the perspectives of employees, managers, and leaders were not considered. Lastly, time constraints prevented a long-term analysis of DEI programs, leaving gaps in understanding their future development.

SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study provides a foundational understanding of DEI practices from the perspective of HR professionals in the Indian manufacturing sector. However, there remains considerable scope for future research. Comparative studies can be conducted across different regions or between manufacturing and other sectors such as IT or services to assess sector-specific challenges and progress in DEI implementation. Future research can also include perspectives of employees from diverse backgrounds to gain a holistic view of inclusivity at the workplace. Longitudinal studies may explore the impact of DEI initiatives over time, while quantitative research could measure the correlation between DEI practices and organizational outcomes such as employee retention, innovation, or productivity. Moreover, the role of policy interventions, leadership commitment, and cultural change in fostering inclusive workplaces offers fertile ground for in-depth exploration. Expanding research in these areas can contribute to more effective and sustainable DEI frameworks in the industry.

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APPENDICES

Informed Consent

Consent form

I am Phavana Sri.P currently pursuing Masters in Social Work specializing in Human Resource Development and Management (MSW HRDM) at CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bangalore Central Campus. I'm conducting a research titled "**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Perspectives from HR Professionals in Manufacturing Industry.**"

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study is to Understand various HR strategies that are used in implementing DEI initiatives in the organization, the challenges faced throughout the process and to study the impact of DEI initiatives in Organization performance.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact me at phavana.p@msw.christuniversity.in

Contact Number- 9944376013

Participant Information Sheet

- **Voluntary Participation:** Participation in this research study is voluntary. Your decision to participate or withdraw will not result in any penalty.
- **Confidentiality:** Your participation and responses will be kept strictly confidential. All data collected, including interview recordings and transcripts, will be stored securely and accessed only by the researcher.
- **Interview Recording:** Interviews will be recorded to ensure accuracy in data analysis. Recordings will be transcribed verbatim. Your identity will remain anonymous in all transcripts and any publications resulting from this study.
- **Withdraw at Will:** You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason, without any consequences.
- **Opportunities to be Informed of Results:** The results of this study are expected to be available around March 2025. If you wish to receive a summary of the findings, please contact the principal investigator.
- **Trigger Warning:** Some questions in the interviews may be personally sensitive. You may be asked to provide information about yourself, such as age, education, and history of past professional experiences. Rest assured, all information provided will be treated with strict confidentiality.

I have read this form and I freely consent to participate in this study

Participant name- _____

Date- _____

Signature- _____

Socio- Demographic Details

(Participant Information Form)

1. Name
2. Age
3. Gender
4. Current Job Title/ Position
5. Educational Qualification
6. Name of the working organization
7. Job Location
8. Current Employment sector
9. Years of experience In HR

Research questionnaire

1. Understanding and analysing the HR strategies for initiating DEI practices

- How do HR strategies facilitate the initiation of DEI practices within these workplaces?
- What are the practical DEI initiatives that are followed in your organization?
- What are policies that are related to DEI practices that are followed in your organization?
- Can you share any successful DEI initiatives or practices that have been implemented?

2. Exploring challenges and barriers in Implementing DEI initiatives

- What are the main challenges and barriers encountered in the implementation of DEI initiatives?
- Are there any opportunities for improvement or innovation in this area that you've identified?
- How do you navigate potential conflicts or resistance to diversity, inclusion, and equity initiatives?

3. **To understand the impact of DEI initiatives on organizational performance in workplaces?**
- What are the perceived impacts of DEI initiatives on organizational performance in your workplace?
 - How do you assess the impact of diversity, inclusion, and equity initiatives within your organization?
 - Can you share any outcomes or successes resulting from these initiatives?

