

Embracing Differences: Cultivating Diversity and Inclusion in Indian Workplace

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ABSTRACT

Workplace diversity and inclusion (D&I) are crucial for promoting innovation, improving decision-making and enhancing employee satisfaction. In India, where diversity is essential, D&I efforts are important for addressing challenges like gender inequality and caste-based discrimination. This paper examines the aspect of D&I in Indian organizations, highlighting historical contexts, demographic aspects, benefits, challenges and initiatives undertaken by companies like Infosys, TATA Group, Accenture India, Wipro and HUL. It explores strategies for promoting D&I, real-time data analysis and the impact of D&I on organizational performance. The paper concludes with recommendations for continuous monitoring and evaluation to sustain and enhance D&I efforts in the future.

Key Words: *Diversity Management, multiculturalism, organizational culture and Talent acquisition.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Workplace diversity means having a workforce made up of people from different backgrounds such as gender, ethnicity, religion, age and abilities. Inclusion means creating an environment where all these diverse people feel respected, valued and able to contribute their best.

Diversity and inclusion are crucial for businesses because they bring fresh perspectives, ideas and talents to the table. They also improve employee satisfaction, creativity and innovation as well as leading to better problem-solving and decision-making. Diverse and inclusive workplaces tend to attract top talent and enhance the company's reputation.

India's vast population and countless social identities epitomizes diversity. From language related diversity with over 22 officially recognized languages to religious plurality including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism and others, workplaces reflect a model of this societal mixture. Factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation contribute to the complex nature of diversity in Indian organizations.

In India, the corporate world is vast and varied as well as encompassing industries such as IT, manufacturing, healthcare and finance. The workforce is diverse as well as consisting of people from different regions, cultures

and religions. However, challenges like gender inequality and caste-based discrimination still exist, making diversity and inclusion efforts important.

In India, the importance of workplace diversity and inclusion (D&I) cannot be overstated. As we examine into the dynamics of D&I in Indian organizations, we witness a transformative journey driven by progressive policies, evolving mind-sets and a commitment to equity.

2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

India is a land of diverse cultures, languages and traditions. Historically, the caste system has played an important role in shaping social hierarchies, leading to discrimination and inequality. However, initiatives like positive action and social movements have aimed to address these issues and promote diversity and inclusion.

The Indian government has implemented various laws and policies to promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace. For example, the Constitution prohibits discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. Even, there are specific laws like the Equal Remuneration Act and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act that aim to ensure equal opportunities for all.

Indian organizations have made progresses in promoting diversity and inclusion but challenges remain. Some companies have implemented diversity training programs, set diversity targets and established employee resource groups. However, unconscious bias, cultural norms and lack of awareness still obstruct progress in many workplaces.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Workplace diversity has become a topic of great interest in recent years, as organisations aim to comprehend its influence and effectiveness in promoting inclusive cultures and accomplishing organisational objectives. This literature review consolidates significant data from many research papers that illuminate various facets of workplace diversity and its administration.

In his paper titled "Workplace Diversity: Learning from Diverse Companies in the Modern Era," Dr. Arthur M. Baldonado (2024) offers valuable insights on the influence and efficacy of workplace diversity programmes. Baldonado emphasises the significance of these programmes in improving organisational performance through the analysis of various firms.

Hauret and Williams (2020) investigated the correlation between workplace diversity, job happiness, and the moderating influence of co-worker communication. Their study emphasises the imperative for employers to proactively oversee diversity within their organisations in order to enhance favourable job results and cultivate efficient communication among staff members.

Gross-Gołacka et al. (2022) investigated techniques to enhance outcomes in the domain of creative, innovative, and diversified human resources management. Their research highlights the need of using quantitative decision-making in management quality, emphasising the necessity of data-driven approaches to improve diversity initiatives.

Shikha Rathee (2023) provides a comprehensive analysis of the current body of literature on the management of workplace diversity, with a particular focus on important factors such as obstacles, strategies, and advantages. Rathee's study offers useful insights into the complex and diverse nature of workplace diversity, as well as the practical techniques that organisations may use to make the most of this variety.

In their study, Dr. Anju Sigroha and Gaurav (2020) examine the significance and handling of diversity in organisations, classifying diversity into primary and secondary aspects. Their research emphasises the significance of efficient diversity management in harnessing people's distinct abilities and viewpoints to cultivate creativity, innovation, and mutual regard in the work environment.

Atiq Ur Rehman (2016) analyses the advantages and obstacles of workplace diversity by utilising Malaysia's experience as a case study. Rehman's research highlights the favourable results linked to diversity, such as enhanced customer service, innovation, recruiting, creativity, decision-making skills, and mutual respect among employees.

The studied literature offers useful insights into several elements of workplace diversity. However, there are several gaps that require more investigation:

Intersectionality: Insufficient focus has been given to the impact of intersecting identities, such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status, on individuals' experiences and outcomes in different work environments.

Cross-cultural communication: It is necessary to investigate efficient methods for promoting cross-cultural communication and cooperation in various organizational environments, especially in globalized circumstances.

Long-Term Impact: Further study is required to evaluate the enduring effects of diversity programmes on organizational performance, staff retention, and general workplace dynamics.

The current state of research on diversity in leadership is inadequate in terms of studying the representation and experiences of persons from varied backgrounds in leadership roles, as well as the impact of inclusive leadership on organizational outcomes.

Additional research is required to provide strong measurements and evaluation frameworks that can effectively assess the success of diversity programmes and initiatives in reaching intended results. The present paper explores these aspects of workforce diversity in the context of Indian business with the help of data and information available in the secondary sources.

By addressing these gaps, we can enhance our comprehension of workplace diversity and use this knowledge to create evidence-based approaches that foster inclusivity and fully utilize the different talents within our workforce.

4. DEMOGRAPHIC ASPECT

Gender diversity in Indian workplaces has gotten better but there is still a gap especially in top positions. Women deal with hurdles like societal expectations and childcare duties, limiting their presence in certain jobs. Despite some progress, there is still a way to go for equality in

Indian workplaces. Women aren't seen as much in leadership roles and often face unfair treatment in pay and opportunities. But things are changing slowly with programs like mentorship and leadership training.

India's a mix of different cultures, religions and languages. While this diversity exists, discrimination based on things like language or region still happens. This mix shows up in workplaces too, with people from various backgrounds. Companies see the value in having diverse teams but sometimes biases get in the way.

India's workforce is young with lots of millennials and Gen Z. Having people of different ages brings fresh ideas and skills but older workers can sometimes face discrimination. People with disabilities also face challenges in finding work due to inaccessible places and biased attitudes.

Companies are starting to change this by making workplaces more accessible and hiring inclusively.

Efforts to include LGBTQ+ folks and people with disabilities at work are growing. Companies are making policies to support them and creating a welcoming atmosphere. But there is still a long road to full acceptance especially for LGBTQ+ individuals who face social stigma. Yet, some forward-thinking companies are making steps by educating their employees and providing support networks.

5. BENEFITS

There are many benefits for implementing Workplace Diversity and Inclusion in Indian Organizations. Some benefits are as follows:

5.1. Enhanced Creativity and Innovation: Diversity brings together people with different perspectives, experiences and ideas as well as leading to more innovative solutions to business challenges. When employees feel valued and included, they are more likely to share their unique insights and take risks, driving creativity and innovation within the organization.

5.2. Improved Decision-making Processes: Diverse teams are better equipped to analyse complex problems from multiple angles and come up with well-rounded solutions.

5.3. Better Employee Engagement and Retention: Inclusive workplaces support a sense of belonging and loyalty among employees as well as leading to higher levels of engagement and retention.

5.4. Positive Impact on Organizational Performance and Reputation: Companies that prioritize diversity and inclusion tend to outperform their competitors in terms of financial performance, innovation and customer satisfaction.

6. CHALLENGES

There are many challenges due to Workplace Diversity and Inclusion in Indian Organizations. Some challenges are as follows:

6.1. Unconscious Bias in Recruitment and Promotion: In the workplace, unconscious bias can lead to unfair treatment in hiring, promotion and performance evaluations, favouring certain groups over others based on characteristics like gender, race or appearance.

6.2. Lack of Inclusive Policies and Practices: Many organizations lack policies and practices that support diversity and inclusion such as flexible work arrangements, diversity training and inclusive language guidelines.

6.3. Resistance from Traditional mind-sets and Cultural Norms: In some cases, traditional mind-sets and cultural norms maintain inequality and discrimination in the workplace. For example, gender roles, caste-based hierarchies and religious biases can influence hiring decisions, team dynamics and career opportunities as well as creating barriers for certain groups to succeed.

6.4. Limited access to Opportunities for Certain Demographic Groups: Socioeconomic factors such as poverty, lack of education and geographic location can limit access to opportunities for marginalized groups in India. For example, women from rural areas face barriers to education and employment while people with disabilities struggle to find accessible workplaces and transportation options.

7. WORKPLACE D&I IN INDIAN ORGANIZATIONS LIKE INFOSYS, TATA GROUP, ACCENTURE INDIA, WIPRO AND HUL

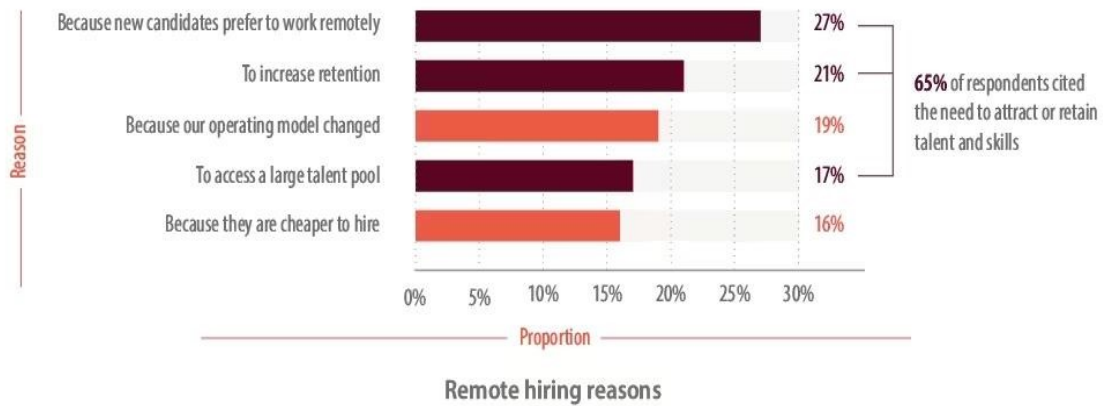
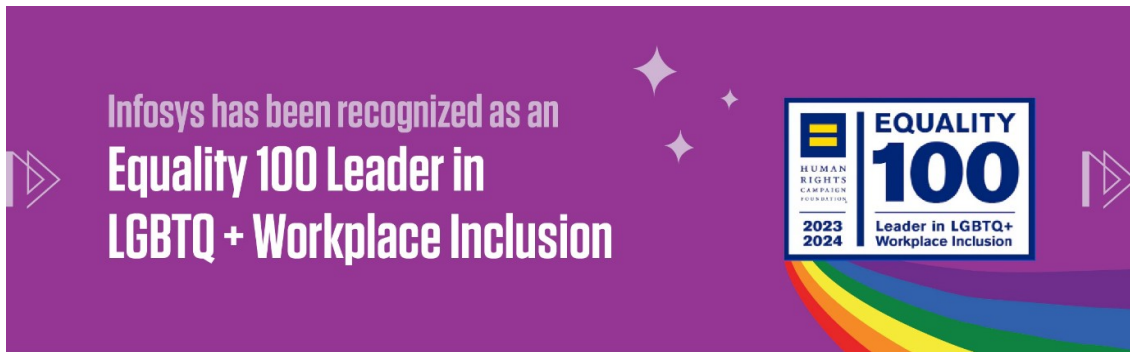
Beyond moral commands, accepting diversity and supporting inclusion yields tangible benefits for organizations. Diverse teams bring a spectrum of perspectives, enhancing problem-solving and decision-making processes. Research indicates that companies with inclusive cultures outperform their peers, attracting top talent and supporting innovation. In the competitive landscape of 2024, organizations like Infosys, TATA Group, Accenture India, Wipro and HUL recognize D&I as a strategic important for sustainable growth and competitive advantage.

Among these challenges, Indian organizations serve as signals of D&I excellence, setting benchmarks for others to emulate. Companies like Infosys, Tata Group and Accenture have implemented comprehensive D&I strategies, supporting inclusive cultures where every individual feels valued and respected. These success stories underscore the transformative power of proactive D&I initiatives in driving organizational performance and societal change.

Analysing real-time data from 2024 provides valuable understanding into the current state of workplace diversity and inclusion in India. A survey conducted across various industries reveals that while progress has been made, disparities persist. For instance, women occupy only 25% of leadership positions, highlighting the gender gap in corporate hierarchies. However, there is a notable increase in the representation of LGBTQ+ employees indicating a shift towards greater inclusivity.

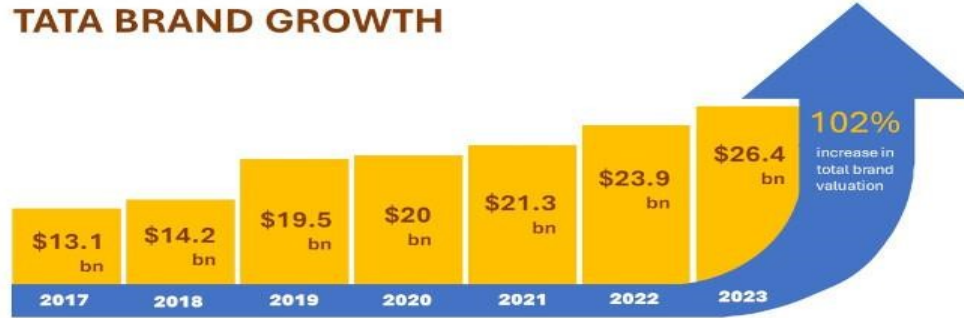
7.1 Infosys: Infosys is a global leader in consulting, technology and outsourcing services.

Infosys has been proactive in promoting diversity and inclusion. The company's initiatives include the Women in Technology program which aims to increase female representation in technical roles through recruitment, training and career development initiatives. Below figures state that Infosys is recognized as an Equality 100 Leader in LGBTQ+ Workplace Inclusion and the remote hiring reasons in Infosys.



7.2 TATA Group: Tata Group is one of India’s largest combinations. They have embedded diversity and inclusion into its core values and business practices. The company’s diversity initiatives encompass gender diversity, LGBTQ+ inclusion and programs for persons with disabilities. Tata Group’s leadership commitment and employee engagement drive its diversity agenda. The below images show the objective or TATA Group and the brand growth of TATA is 102% increase in total brand valuation.

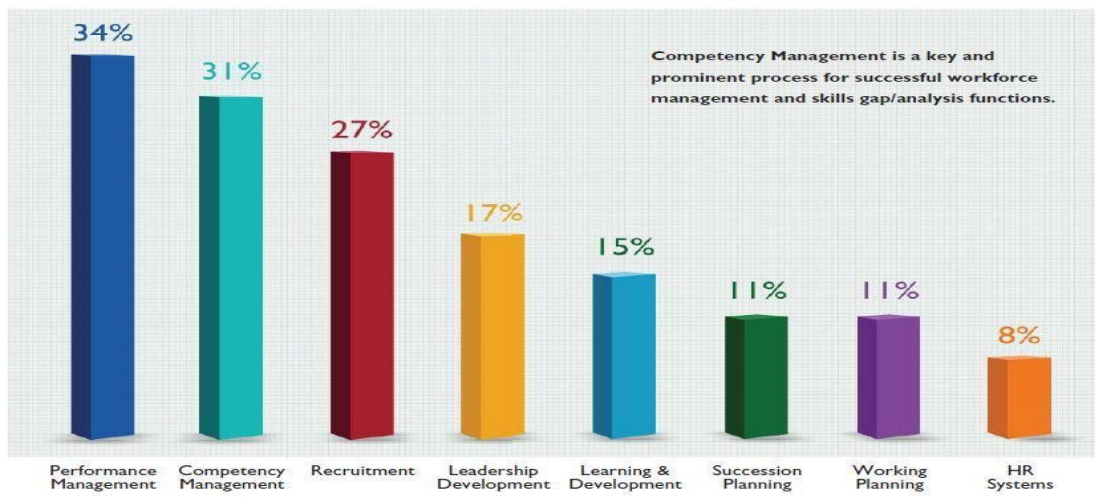




7.3 Accenture India: Accenture India is a leading management consulting and professional services firm. The company has prioritized diversity and inclusion as key drivers of business success. The company’s initiatives include the LGBTQ+ Ally program which trains employees to be allies and advocates for LGBTQ+ inclusion in the workplace and beyond. The below figure states that Accenture have created a diverse board of directors, advancing workplace equality and investment for developing the talent.



7.4 Wipro: Wipro is a global information technology, consulting and outsourcing company. The company has implemented various initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion. The company’s efforts include the Wipro Abilities Network which focuses on creating an inclusive environment for employees with disabilities through accessibility, awareness and advocacy programs. The below image states that Wipro has prominent process for successful workplace management and skills gap functions as well as the revenue for Wipro.



7.5 HUL: HUL is India’s largest fast-moving consumer goods company. The company has integrated diversity and inclusion into its talent management practices. The company’s initiatives include the Diversity and Inclusion Council which drives strategy and implementation across gender, ethnicity, age and other dimensions of diversity. The below figures state that HUL are continuously using the accessing diverse talent, inclusive

talent practices and unereotype the culture as well as HUL has won the award of one of the best organization for women 2023.



These companies have seen positive outcomes from their diversity and inclusion efforts including increased employee satisfaction, higher levels of innovation and improved business performance. They have been able to attract and retain top talent, enhance their reputation as employers of choice and drive sustainable growth and profitability with the help of promoting and supporting the culture of inclusion and diversity.

8. WORKPLACE D&I INITIATIVES

In India, Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) are not just ethical imperatives anymore. They have become crucial strategic imperatives for businesses aiming to excel in 2024 and beyond. To realize the vision of truly inclusive workplaces, Indian companies like Infosys, TATA Group, Accenture India, Wipro and HUL translate their D&I aspirations into actionable initiatives. Each organization has likely implemented various initiatives to support diversity and inclusion in the workplace. These initiatives include:

8.1 Recruitment and Hiring Practices: Implementing strategies to attract diverse talent pools such as targeted recruitment efforts, partnerships with diverse organizations and inclusive job descriptions.

8.2 Training and Development: Providing diversity and inclusion training programs to raise awareness, enhance cultural competency and reduce unconscious biases among employees and leadership.

8.3 Employee Resource Groups (ERGs): Establishing ERGs or affinity groups to provide support, networking opportunities and advocacy for underrepresented groups within the organization.

8.4 Flexible Work Policies: Offering flexible work arrangements such as remote work options and flexible hours, to accommodate employees' diverse needs and lifestyles.

8.5 Leadership Commitment: Presenting visible leadership commitment to diversity and inclusion through the establishment of diversity councils, the appointment of diversity officers and the incorporation of diversity metrics into performance evaluations.

8.6 Embracing Neurodiversity: With an estimated 27 million neurodiversity individuals in

India, companies have a golden opportunity to tap into a vast reservoir of untapped talent. In 2024, forward-thinking organizations will actively accept and empower individuals with conditions like ADHD, dyslexia and autism.

8.7 Prioritizing Accessibility: Accessibility should extend beyond a mere slogan in Indian business practices. Whether it's ensuring physical infrastructure is barrier-free or making digital platforms more inclusive, companies need to embed accessibility into every aspect of their operations.

8.8 Investing in Mentorship and Sponsorship: Genuine mentorship and sponsorship programs tailored to underrepresented groups such as women, LGBTQ+ individuals and Dalits will be pivotal in 2024. This leaves behind token gestures or quotas. It is about providing substantive support, supporting safe spaces for mentorship and actively championing the career progression of those who have historically faced societal and systemic barriers.

8.9 Embracing Diversity: In 2024, successful workplaces will be those that celebrate the variety of languages, religions, ethnicities and cultures that characterize India. This involves not only acknowledging but also appreciating diverse viewpoints, creating environments where individuals feel empowered to express their unique identities and actively participating in cultural festivities and traditions.

9. STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMS FOR PROMOTING D&I



The above figure states that the data analysis in D&I programs. There are many strategies to promote workplace diversity and inclusion in Indian organizations. Some strategies are as follows:

9.1 Leadership Commitment and Accountability: Leaders play a crucial role in driving diversity and inclusion initiatives within organizations. Presentation of their commitment to diversity, setting clear goals and holding themselves and others accountable. Leaders can create a culture where diversity and inclusion are valued and prioritized at all levels.

9.2 Diverse Recruitment and Retention Initiatives: To attract and retain a diverse workforce, organizations can implement recruitment strategies that target underrepresented groups such as women, minorities and differently-abled individuals. This involves partnering with diversity-focused recruitment agencies, attending job fairs and networking events for specific communities and offering internships or apprenticeships to students from diverse backgrounds.

9.3 Training Programs on Unconscious Bias and Cultural Competence: Training programs can help employees recognize and mitigate unconscious bias in their decision-making processes. To raising awareness of assumptions and biases, teaching empathy and cultural competence and providing tools for inclusive communication and collaboration, organizations can create a more inclusive and equitable workplace for all employees.

9.4 Employee Resource Groups and Mentorship Programs: Employee resource groups (ERGs) provide a platform for employees from diverse backgrounds to connect, support each other and advocate for inclusive policies and practices within the organization. Similarly, mentorship programs can pair employees from underrepresented groups with more experienced colleagues who can offer guidance, support and career development opportunities.

10. REAL-TIME DATA ANALYSIS

In recent years, the adoption of inclusive hiring practices for women has increased by 45%, signalling a global dedication to gender equality in the workforce. Employers are increasingly recognizing the importance of diversity and inclusion not just as a social responsibility but also as a catalyst for business success. Recent trends and statistics shows that companies with diverse leadership teams and inclusive cultures outperform their peers.

10.1 Leadership Development: 73% of companies are investing in leadership development programs modified specifically for women to facilitate their progression into senior leadership positions.

10.2 Mentorship and Sponsorship: 65% of companies are supporting mentorship

relationships and creating sponsorship opportunities to assist women in guiding organizational challenges and accessing career advancement opportunities.

10.3 Diverse Candidate sourcing: 81% of companies are actively expanding their candidate sourcing strategies to tap into a broader and more diverse talent pool.

10.4 Gender-blind Recruitment Processes: 62% of organizations are addressing unconscious bias in hiring by implementing gender-blind recruitment practices, ensuring candidates are evaluated solely based on their skills and qualifications.

10.5 Pay Equity: 72% of companies have integrated pay equity into their key organizational objectives and regularly conduct audits to rectify any existing disparities.

10.6 Recognition of Unpaid Labour: 48% of surveyed companies are acknowledging the value of unpaid labour, particularly caregiving responsibilities that unequally affect women.

10.7 Supportive Leadership: 69% of organizations highlight the critical role of strong leadership commitment in the success of rewards and recognition programs for women.

10.8 Employee resource groups (ERGs): ERGs are deemed important in promoting inclusion at all levels of the organization including senior management for 90% of the companies surveyed.

11. IMPACT OF D&I ON ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Research indicates a strong correlation between diversity and inclusion and various performance metrics including employee satisfaction, innovation and market competitiveness. Organizations that prioritize diversity tend to outperform their peers, utilizing a rich canvas of perspectives to drive creativity and problem-solving. Diverse teams are better equipped to understand and serve diverse customer segments, enhancing brand loyalty and market reach. Key impacts are as follows:

11.1 Employee Engagement and Satisfaction: Diversity and inclusion contribute to higher levels of employee engagement, satisfaction and retention. This explores the relationship between inclusivity and workforce morale, productivity and loyalty.

11.2 Innovation and Creativity: Diverse teams are more innovative and creative as well as bringing a wider range of perspectives and problem-solving approaches to the table.

11.3 Market Competitiveness: Organizations that prioritize diversity and inclusion are better positioned to attract top talent, access diverse markets and adapt to changing consumer preferences.

11.4 Financial Performance: Research suggests a positive correlation between diversity and financial performance with diverse companies outperforming their peers in terms of profitability and shareholder value.

11.5 Reputation and Brand Image: Diversity and inclusion initiatives can enhance an organization’s reputation and brand image, attracting customers, investors and partners who value inclusive practices.

12. FUTURE OUTLOOK AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Regular monitoring and evaluation are important to track progress, identify gaps and coursecorrect diversity and inclusion initiatives. Organizations should collect and analyse data on workforce demographics, employee experiences and inclusion metrics to inform evidencebased decision-making and demonstrate accountability to stakeholders.

It is likely that diversity and inclusion will continue to be top priorities for Indian organizations, driven by changing demographics, progressing consumer preferences and increasing scrutiny from stakeholders. Companies that invest in diversity initiatives and create inclusive cultures will be better positioned to attract and retain top talent, support innovation and creativity and build sustainable businesses for the future.

To enhance their diversity initiatives, organizations should focus on several key areas including leadership commitment and accountability, diverse recruitment and retention strategies, training and development programs and creating a culture of inclusion and belonging. It is important for organizations to continuously monitor and evaluate their diversity initiatives to ensure they are having the desired impact and identify areas for improvement.

13. COMPARISON TABLE FOR INFOSYS, TATA GROUP, ACCENTURE INDIA,

WIPRO AND HUL BASEDON THEIR D&I INITIATIVES

| Aspects | Infosys | TATA Group | Accenture India | Wipro | HUL |
|---------------------------------|---|---|--|--|---|
| Introduction to D&I Initiatives | Proactive in promoting D&I with programs like Women in Technology, focusing on increasing female representation in technical roles. | Embedded D&I into core values and business practices, focusing on gender diversity, LGBTQ+ inclusion and disability programs. | Prioritized D&I as key drivers of business success with initiatives like the LGBTQ+ Ally program and diverse board of directors. | Implemented various initiatives including the Wipro Abilities Network for employees with disabilities. Notable processes for workplace | Integrated D&I into talent management practices, with initiatives like the Diversity and Inclusion Council focusing on gender, ethnicity, and |

| | | | | | |
|------------------------|---|---|---|--|--|
| | Recognized as a leader in LGBTQ+ workplace inclusion and achieving Equality 100 status. | Recognized as an objectivedriven organization with a 102% increase in total brand valuation. | Advanced workplace equality and investment in talent development. | management and skills gap functions. Showed revenue growth. | age dimensions. Continuous usage of diverse talent and inclusive talent practices. Awarded one of the best organizations for women in 2023. |
| Workplace Demographics | Recognition of a diverse talent pool with specific demographic aspect. | Commitment to diversity across gender, LGBTQ+ and disability dimensions. Brand growth showcased. | Highlights inclusion at all levels with diverse board of directors and investments in talent development. | Active support for employees with disabilities. Revenue growth highlighted. | Focus on gender, ethnicity and age dimensions within the workforce. Continuous use of diverse talent and inclusive practices. Award recognition for women. |
| Key D&I Initiatives | Women in Technology program, LGBTQ+ Workplace Inclusion leadership. | Gender diversity, LGBTQ+ inclusion and disability programs. Objectivedriven approach and brand growth. | LGBTQ+ Ally program, diverse board of directors. Highlights workplace equality and investment. | Wipro Abilities Network, workplace management processes, skills gap functions. Revenue focus. | Diversity and Inclusion Council, diverse talent utilization, inclusive talent practices, awards for women. |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Impact on Organizational Performance | Positive outcomes seen in increased employee satisfaction, innovation and business performance. Attracted top talent and improved reputation. | Positive impact on brand valuation, driven by commitment to D&I across various dimensions. | Enhanced business success through diverse leadership and talent investment. | Revenue growth alongside inclusive workplace management processes. | Improved business performance, talent recognition and awards for women. |
| Challenges Faced | Resistance from traditional mind-sets and unconscious bias. | Addressing unconscious bias and limited opportunities for certain groups. | Overcoming resistance from traditional mind-sets and unconscious bias. | Addressing unconscious bias and limited opportunities. | Tackling resistance from traditional mind-sets and unconscious bias. |
| Future Outlook | Likely to continue prioritizing D&I, adapting strategies for sustainable growth. | D&I to remain a top priority, focusing on continued innovation and inclusive practices. | Continued emphasis on D&I, adapting to changing demographics and business aspects. | Sustainable growth through D&I, developing strategies for greater inclusivity. | Continued focus on D&I for sustainable business success and societal impact. |

14. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, workplace diversity and inclusion (D&I) are important for Indian organizations to succeed in today's dynamic aspect. Companies can unlock innovation, enhance decision making and support a culture of belonging with the help of focusing on D&I initiatives. While challenges persist, initiatives by industry leaders show the transformative power of D&I. Continuous monitoring and evaluation will be critical to sustaining and enhancing D&I efforts, ensuring organizations remain adaptive and inclusive in the face of developing societal and business aspects.

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