

Interplay Of Perceived Diversity Climate And Affective Commitment: Impact On Employee Turnover Intentions

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ABSTRACT:

The present study aims to investigate the effect of perceived diversity climate on employee turnover intentions from a social identity lens view alongside assessing the mediating role of affective commitment between the hypothesized connexion. Current research work uses a structural equation modeling approach to analyze the hypothesized connexion with 302 full-time employees working in the Indian IT industry. Findings indicate that employees who have a favorable view of the diversity climate report lower intention to quit not only directly but also indirectly through affective commitment. The study serves a dual role: it adds up to the literature database by assessing the fundamental mechanism that clarifies the relationship between diversity climate and turnover intentions, as well as it assists managers in their decisions by emphasizing the importance of developing a positive climate for diversity as a means to retain employees.

Keywords: *Perceived diversity Climate, Affective commitment, Turnover intention, Social identity theory, Indian IT Industry*

INTRODUCTION

As a result of globalization, diversity has increased in the modern workforce and has position itself as an indispensable element in organizations. The universality of diversity in workplaces cannot be overlooked as its quintessence has transformed from juridical responsibility to strategic paramountcy (Kundu and Mor, 2017). Organizations have recognized the importance of having a motivated and diverse workforce to reach milestones at a rapid pace (Sinha and Bhatt, 2020) and as a tactic for optimizing market opportunities (Kaur et al., 2022). These benefits encompass higher productivity, attainable goals, innovation, and creative ideas, enhanced customer service, and the establishment of an engaging work atmosphere (Joubert, 2017). Ironically, the antithesis of diversity is also a reality. Conventional issues linked with a diversified workforce include employees who are less drawn to or dedicated to the group, lower levels of job satisfaction, inadequate task performance, greater absenteeism, and employee turnover

(Kaur et al., 2022; McCallaghan, 2020). Owing to this “doubles-edged” mechanism, researchers have also begun focusing on diversity-related disciplines. Diversity climate, the study of diversity-related perceptions, is one of the significant diversity-related disciplines which alludes to employees' common perspectives regarding the HR policies and practices directed at identifying and valuing the differences among individuals (Choi, 2013). Pugh et al., (2008, p. 1422), defined diversity climate as “perceptions of an organization's diversity-related policies, practices, and procedures”. Diversity climate transpires at the unit level (characterized as collective viewpoints of the members of a group or unit) or at the individual level (engrossed in the perspective of individual employees). Adhering to prior studies on diversity climate (Kaur et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2020; Madera et al., 2016), the current study kingpins its work at the individual level since driving factors of employee attitude and behavior are not objective social stimuli but rather their

viewpoints and interpretation of those social stimuli. The concept of diversity climate has acquired attention as it serves a significant role in optimizing the favorable and positive effects of diversity in the workplace (Cachat-Rosset et al., 2019). Various researchers have documented the association between diversity climate and positive outcomes (Reinwald et al., 2018) little work has been carried out to explore the mechanisms by which diversity climate results in positive outcomes. In congruence with human resources, several studies have shown that changes in the environment (both internal and external) can impact the organizational climate, either directly or indirectly. This can lower the level of job satisfaction, which is correlated to employee commitment, further leading to employees' desire to quit their jobs, which can ultimately lead to actual turnover. Thus, the study postulate that employee affective commitment account for the underlying mediating mechanism through which diversity climate relates

to employee turnover intentions to elicit beneficial outcomes. The context of the Indian IT industry, for this study, is incredibly significant. As anticipated by Basu (2001), the IT industry has eventuated as “India’s philosopher’s stone” leading India to establish a foothold in the global market and positioning itself as a global player to be reckoned with (Gupta et al., 2015). The Indian IT industry is the largest private-sector employer and emboldens a diverse array of human assets (Kundu and Mor, 2017). As asserted by Patrick and Kumar (2012) the industry lays its focus on mitigating prejudices and discrimination in the workplace by stimulating consciousness regarding workplace diversity through various tactics like admitting dissimilarities, recognizing diversity, and valuing fundamental rights. Furthermore, the Indian government has designated the information technology industry as a key priority for the development of the nation and has committed significant resources to expedite its growth (Ilavarasan, 2007). This industry’s growth acts as a barometer for other industries. The paper is further structured as follows: the next section discourse regarding the literature review and hypotheses development. The third section outlines the research methodology, which includes the sample and study procedure, followed by the fourth section, which addresses the results and their interpretation, and finally, the research conclusions, implications, limitations, and future research directions are discussed.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Perceived diversity climate Diversity climate is delineated as “employees’ perceptions about the extent to which

their organization values diversity as evident in the organization’s formal structure, informal values, and social integration of underrepresented employees” (Dwertmann et al., 2016, p. 1137). Researchers have broadened this definition to incorporate the perception of employees regarding their work environment in light of individual differences. Hofhuis et al., (2016, p. 1) posited a diversity climate as “an organizational climate characterized by openness towards and/or appreciation of individual differences”. Likewise, Mor Barak et al., (1998, p. 83) refer to diversity climate as “employee behaviors and attitudes that are grounded in perceptions of the organizational context related to women and minorities”. Dwertmann et al., (2016) contended that the climate for diversity is perceived from two different viewpoints. The first perspective is alluded to as the “fairness and discrimination” viewpoint, which emphasizes providing equal opportunities, ensuring fair representation, mitigating discrimination in workplaces as well as eradicating social exclusion while the second viewpoint is the “synergy perspective”, which is concerned with realizing the possible performance advantages of diversity by encompassing divergent skills, strengths, experiences, and perspectives. The two points of view are founded on different theoretical foundations, and therefore, represent two fundamentally divergent (but interconnected) notions. The synergy perspective is more oriented on how teams or units can maximize organizational efficiency by incorporating different perspectives, experiences, abilities, and talents but has a debilitated analytical footing to anticipate outcomes like employee turnover. As a result, the current study sheds light on the “fairness and

discrimination” viewpoint, which emphasizes perceptions of individuals regarding workplace policies, processes, and numerous different cues enabling them to discern whether their organization values or do not value diversity. **Turnover intention** In a recent review on employee turnover by Hom et al., (2017) employees intending to quit the organization is classified into four categories. The first ones are “enthusiastic leavers”, which comprises personnel intending to quit the organization and do so. The second category comprises the “reluctant stayers”, which comprises personnel intending to quit the organization but cannot. Employees falling under the third category are known as “enthusiastic stayers”, which comprises personnel intending to stay in the organization and do so. The last ones are the “reluctant leavers”, which comprises personnel intending to stay in the organization but cannot. When employees experience disparity and discontent within their work team arrangements, they are more likely to endeavor new employment possibilities. This cogitation can lead to a concrete decision of quitting their employment in the final phase of the thought process. As asserted by Chiu & Francesco (2003), this final phase in the thought process is referred to as turnover intention. Vandenberg and Nelson (1999, p.1315) defined turnover intention as “individuals’ own estimated probability (subjective) that they are permanently leaving the organization at some point in the near future”. Despite the recent accumulation of evidential results demonstrating a disparity between employee turnover intent and actual turnover (Rubenstein et al., 2018), turnover intention is indeed “the strongest single predictor of actual

voluntary turnover” (McKay et al., 2007, p. 40). Perceived diversity climate and turnover intention While the Indian IT sector has established a global influence, this emerging sector faces its human resource challenges. One of them is high turnover rates (Lo, 2015). This high employee turnover is one of the most problematic challenges confronting all global organizations, as it is enormously expensive and destructive to the organizations. Though there are numerous reasons for leaving the organizations, one of them is the lack of diversity management. Indian IT industry is the largest private-sector employer and emboldens a diverse array of human assets (Kundu and Mor, 2017), and therefore managing diversity is a prime requisite in IT companies. Differing from the mainstream diminishes an employee's perception of being accepted by members of the mainstream. As a result, minority individuals tend to develop hostility towards other group members and feel rage and frustration. Managing diversity effectively needs an appropriate diversity climate and therefore accentuating a positive diversity climate is indispensable for personnel in the IT sector. On a predicted base of 4.6 million IT personnel in 2021, industry analysts project a 22-23 percent turnover rate. The IT industry suffers enormous losses when personnel quit. In addition to accounting for replacement expenses, organizations also account for the cost of vacant positions. Increasing workplace diversity is hampered significantly by voluntary turnover (Mor Barak et al., 2016). As the IT industry undertakes initiatives to promote workplace diversity, retention has emerged as a "key strategic imperative." (Barreto, 2019). Though some types of employee turnover are impossible to prevent (e.g.,

retirement and termination), employers must understand what they can do to limit voluntary turnover. Contextualization is required for the creation of effective retention techniques. Understanding workplace culture is vital to comprehending organizational context and developing effective retention tactics (Hom et al., 2017). Individuals might be enticed to an organization with personnel having common traits and beliefs, and therefore personnel unfitting within an organization tends to quit (Mobley, 1982) making organizations more homogeneous (Schneider, 1987). According to social identity theory, individuals sort themselves based on salient traits like gender, age, or race, and behave in congruence with their salient ideologies (Hog and Terry, 2010). Demographic maladaptation has been found to impact turnover, and the result implicitly indicates the significance of diversity on employee turnover intentions (Lee et al., 2020). Employees experiencing an unfavorable climate for diversity contends that the organization does not appreciate their efforts, thus resulting in increased intentions to quit (Buttner and Lowe, 2017). On the contrary, Dwertmann et al. (2016, p.1153) elucidated that “employees who work in positive diversity climates are more likely to reciprocate in the form of positive work attitudes”. Collecting a sample from the multitude of racial groups in the United States, McKay et al., (2007) reported a negative relationship between diversity climate perception and turnover intention. Further, Lee et al., (2020) also documented the negative relationship between diversity climate and turnover intent in Korean multinational corporations. Similarly, one of the recent studies by Kaur et al., (2022) also reported a negative relation-

ship between diversity climate perception and turnover intention. Indeed, factual corroboration supports that employees' perception of diversity climate is negatively linked to their turnover intentions (Barreto, 2019; Brimhall et al., 2014). In light of the above discussion, the study hypothesizes: H1. Perceived diversity climate relates negatively to turnover intentions. The mediating role of affective commitment Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) presents a fundamental basis to elucidate the association between diversity climate and individual-level outcomes. The theory kingpins on the resources that individuals acquire and add to social interaction. The exchanging groups adhere to the reciprocity principle, which states that the group receiving the resources is obliged to reciprocate to the group rendering the resources. Employees and organizations are the two groups involved in workplace exchange (Oh, 2020). The perception of employees and their behavioral standards are shared based on organizational protocols, policies, and procedures which further creates the climate of the organization (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). Mor Barak et al., (1998) contended that incorporating under-represented personnel with fair and equitable policies leads to a positive impact on the perception of employees regarding the climate for diversity. Equal opportunities for advancement are deemed as pro-diversity. In supporting environmental settings, employees perceive themselves as an integral part of the organization (McKay et al., 2007; Ely and Thomas, 2001), thus, reciprocating toward the organization with high commitment and lower turnover intentions. Previous research has revealed a linkage between organizational

commitment and turnover intentions (Arnold and Feldman 1982; Porter et al., 1976). A meta-analysis by Rubenstein et al., (2018) documented that organizational commitment reduces employee turnover by a substantial amount. McKay et al., (2007) demonstrated empirically that organizational commitment can act as a mediating factor between diversity climate and turnover intentions. Meyer and Allen (1997) posited three constituents of commitment: continuance, affective and normative commitment. Allen and Meyer (1996) point out that affective and normative commitments are so closely related that they cannot be considered distinct constructs. Additionally, a study discovered that continuous commitment is unlikely to be classified as a constituent of commitment because it implies that employees have no choice but to remain in their organization (Ahn and Lee, 2015). Consequently, the present study concentrates on affective commitment with the premise that it partially mediates the relationship between diversity climate perception and turnover intentions. H2: Affective commitment partially mediates the relationship between perceived diversity climate and turnover intention.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample and study procedure For this study, the sample for the analysis was drawn from the Indian IT industry located in the Delhi-NCR region, one of the major hubs of IT companies in India. Using non-probability convenience sampling, the online questionnaire was distributed to 389 respondents through google forms. Out of the total, 311 responses were received; yielding a 79.9 percent response rate. We retained 302 valid responses after the post-data

screening for missing and incomplete values.

TABLE I. RESPONDENTS PROFILE (N=302)

Demographic variable	Category	Sum	%
Gender	Male	165	54.6
	Female	137	45.4
Age (in years)	Below 25	65	21.5
	26-30	81	26.8
	31-35	86	28.5
	36-40	54	17.9
	40-45	11	3.6
	Above 45	5	1.7
Marital status	Single	158	52.3
	Married	144	47.7
Educational qualification	Bachelors	221	73.2
	Masters	77	25.5
	Other	4	1.3
Total work experience	Less than 5 years	99	32.8
	6-10	102	33.8
	11-15	81	26.8
	16-20	16	5.3
	More than 20 years	4	1.3

Source(s):
The Authors
Measures

The estimation of each latent variable was based on indicators. Unless otherwise specified, all indicators used a Likert response scale arrayed from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 7 = “strongly agree”. Diversity climate has been measured using 6-items (organizational fairness factor) adapted from the ‘Diversity perception scale’ developed by Mor Barak et al., (1998). The sample item includes “I feel I have been treated differently here because of my sex, religion, or age”. [Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.91$]. Affective commitment was assessed using the 5-item scale adapted from Allen and Meyer (1996). The sample item includes “This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me”. [Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.90$]. For measuring turnover intentions, this study adapted a 3-item scale developed by Liu (2005). The sample item includes “It is very possible that I will look for a new job next year”. [Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.94$]. The constructs used in the study were reliable, exceeding the minimum criterion of 0.70 with a Cronbach alpha coefficient between 0.90 and 0.94. (Nunnally, 1994).

3.3 Data analysis For analysis, the “Structural Equation Modeling” (SEM) approach was employed. Furthermore, we employed bootstrap analysis (5000 bootstrap samples) to determine bias-corrected confidence intervals for the proposed indirect effect.

RESULTS

Table II. reveals that none of the correlation values reach 0.80, indicating that there is no significant problem with multicollinearity in the sample (Asrar-ul-Haq et al., 2019).

4.1 Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) To test the model fit, we used the traditional cut-off values of fit indices ((i.e., CMIN/df < 3,

comparative fit index (CFI) > 0.90, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) < 0.06, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) < 0.08; Hair et al., 2010). A good fit is indicated by fit indices for our proposed measurement model (CMIN/df = 1.76, CFI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.05, SRMR = 0.08). Table II. shows composite reliability of each variable is greater than 0.70, implying strong convergent validity (Malhotra, 2017). AVE determines the discriminant validity. The value of the square root AVE should be greater than the value of the correlation construct (Hair et al., 2010). In Table II, bracket values represent AVE’s square root, indicating that discriminant validity is also supported.

TABLE II. CORRELATIONS AND VALIDITY

S. No.	Variables	1	2	3	CR	AVE
1	Diversity climate	(0.793)			0.91	0.63
2	Affective commitment	0.35**	(0.768)		0.89	0.59
3	Turnover intentions	-0.37**	-0.25**	(0.916)	0.94	0.84

Note: **p < 0.01; bold numbers on the diagonal reflect AVE's square root.

SOURCE: THE AUTHORS STRUCTURAL MODEL

After ensuring that the measurement model possessed sufficient reliability and validity, the proposed structural model was analyzed. The causal relationship between the variables was tested and the significance of the path coefficient was estimated. Three metrical estimations, including the regression coefficient (β), degree of significance (p-value < 0.05), and critical ratio (CR > 1.96) have been used to test the research hypothesis. Results indicated a negative relationship between perceived diversity climate and turnover intention (H1: $\beta = -0.369$, $t = -6.899$, $p < 0.01$), thus supporting H1. In addition, perceived diversity climate is positively and significantly related to affective commitment ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$) and the relationship between affective commitment and turnover intention is negative and significant ($\beta = -0.14$, $p < 0.05$).

4.3 Mediation analysis According to Oh (2020, p.153) “An indirect effect is considered to be significant if 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals does not include 0”. The findings of bootstrapping as shown in Table III, indicated that the indirect effect via affective commitment is significant (5000 bootstraps; indirect effect = -0.481; 95% CI [-0.11, -0.01], thus supporting H2.

Table III. Bootstrapping results for mediation

Mediation path	Indirect effect	SE	95% confidence interval
Perceived diversity climate ---> Affective commitment ---> Turnover intentions	-0.48	0.05	(-0.11, -0.01)

Note: Bootstrap with 5000 samples

Source: The Authors

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In comparison to the conventional reactive and pessimistic stance, the empirical results of the study demonstrate optimistic and substantial effects of perceptions of diversity climate among organizational employees. The study results indicated that employees' intention to quit the organization decreases with an increase in a positive climate for diversity, thus supporting Hypothesis 1 (H1). This significant result suggests that demographic diversity perception need not inherently be generated by categories that invoke undesirable stereotypes, inequalities, and presumptions. Paralleling the burgeoning interest in diversity issues, researchers have investigated the impact of diversity climate perceptions and concluded that managing diversity effectively will lead to an increase in favourable outcomes, thus, nullifying the pillars of distinction and categorization that are central to social beings. In order to build supportive work environments and to reduce the likelihood of employee turnover, diversity management is unavoidable. Based on the theory of social identity, it is believed that diversity in the Indian IT industry is an important predictor of turnover activity. Additionally, by addressing affective commitment as a mediator between diversity climate and related outcomes, this article adds up to the existing diversity literature. The mediation test demonstrates that affective commitment partly mediates the impact of associations between employees' perception of diversity climate and employee turnover intentions. The study results were congruent with McKay et al., (2007) in the context of national retail organizations. Based on our study

findings, we conclude that the apprehension of the diverse environment substantially decreases turnover intentions not only directly but also indirectly through the importance of employees' affective commitment.

IMPLICATIONS THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Researchers frequently analyze the influence of diversity attributes on different measures with suppositions based on the perception of those attributes (Kirchmeyer, 1995). Therefore, the current research emphasizes understanding the dynamics of diversity by scrutinizing employee perception, instead of assessing actual diversity. Secondly, as asserted by Klarsfeld et al., (2014), in different social contexts, the policy, discussion, and introspection of multiculturalism-related issues have been hesitant, passive, and perceived as daunting. By analyzing diversity in the context of India, this study adds up to the pre-existing literature. Managerial implications Under the burden of doing something regarding increasing diversity in workplaces, many organizations are implementing diversity training sessions for employees without prior evaluation. The drawback of this "one size fits all" approach is that such techniques can be efficacious in sensitizing dissimilar individuals, but they are not coping with the systems and practices of organizations that can promote the erroneous treatment of dissimilar individuals. Organizations need to critically evaluate and modify their policies and practices and how they have been carried out in conjunction with these interventions. Thus, understanding diversity-related organizational characteristics is a significant phase in scheming effective interventions for an organization (Barak, 1999).

In addition, instituting participatory decision-making systems and a sturdy mentoring mechanism to integrate employees who differ from the mainstream into the organization's inner circle should be implemented as ongoing initiatives over a prolonged time to reap positive and potential benefits, instead of just one-time managerial checklist event.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

Due to the compilation of data from the Indian IT industry, the outcomes may differ in other organizational contexts. Secondly, a cross-sectional design has been used for data collection. For example, no follow-up was conducted to ascertain whether the respondent's intent to quit manifested in actual actions. Future research initiatives may solve this problem by incorporating longitudinal studies that examine the antecedents and consequences of a diverse climate. Besides, for this analysis, affective commitment was considered as an intervening variable. Future researchers can include other mediating variables like inclusion or organizational justice.

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