

Impact of Effective Workforce Diversity Management on Employees' Performance in Construction Sector (With Special Reference to Selected Construction Companies in Eastern Province)

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Abstract

The Effective Workforce Diversity Management (EWDm) is an important tool between the employers and the employees in order to building up the good relationship and to get the success of an organization. This study sought to analyze EWDm on Employees' Performance (EP) in construction industry in eastern province. The sample consisted of 180 Workers of 18 construction companies in eastern province. Primary data were gathered through a structured questionnaire among the respondents in sample. The research findings revealed that there is a significant strong positive relationship between EWDm and EP, the weak negative relationship between EWDm and Conflict (CN), and the weak negative relationship between CN and EP. Moreover CN is not the mediator in between EWDm and EP but it has the direct negative impact on CN further all the variables scored higher value with existing situation of EWDm and EP, while surprisingly, CN does not. In the light of the results, possible managerial implications were discussed and future research subjects were recommended. This research contributes to the growing literature on the construction industry in eastern province those who having high diversified employees.

Keywords: Effective Workforce Diversity Management (EWDm), Employees' Performance (EP), Conflict (CN).

Introduction

Workforce diversity refers to organizations that are becoming more heterogeneous with the mix of people and the comprised of variety of backgrounds, styles, perspectives, values and beliefs (Robbins, 2009; and Rasmussen, 1996). Moreover, Good work force diversity practices in the area of human resources are believed to enhance both employee and organizational performance (Adler, 1986). Diversity management refers to the voluntary organizational actions that are designed to create greater inclusion of employees from various backgrounds into the formal and informal organizational structures through deliberate policies and programs (HaysThomas, 2004; Kaiser & Prange, 2004; Nyambegera, 2002; Ozbilgin & Tatli, 2008; Palmer, 2003; Palmi, 2001). Organizations that can develop and employ the necessary policies and procedure to do so this will reduce the conflict among the employees it may leads to increase their effectiveness (Rau & Hyland, 2003). According to Sweet, (2005); Mattis (2002)

propose that organizationally diverse practices, programmes and policies are designed as 'best practice' when they are judged by experts to be above and beyond the main stream compared to other organizations, organizations in construction industry should continually benchmark their diversity outcomes against other organizations.

Statement of the problem

According to Rau & Hyland, 2003, unmanaged diversity in the workplace might become an obstacle for achieving organizational goals. If the organization does not properly manage their diversified workforce it generates conflicts between employees. Further, improvements in elimination of workplace conflicts would automatically enhance employee performance (Pondy, 2003; Passos & Caetano, 2005; Max Weber, 1929-1947). But according to Dodd (2003) found that organizations are operating in a turbulent (Conflict) business environment will allow them to improve their performance and competitiveness. Conflict is not always negative and does not always create hostilities. (Kigali, 2006).

In Sri Lankan context there are only a few researches were conducted by using different factors but the objectives of their researches are different from this research. i.e Jegatheeswaran and T. Sivaskaran (2014), they found that the significant impact of diversity on employees' performance. But this research is aimed to explain how the Effective Workforce Diversity Management (EWD) impact on Employees' Performance (EP) through Conflict (CN) among diversified employees in construction sector in eastern province.

Objective of the study

- To identify the nature of Effective Workforce Diversity Management, Conflict and Employees' Performance practices in construction industry.
- To identify the relationships among Effective Workforce Diversity Management, Conflict and Employees' Performance.
- To determine whether Conflict mediate the relationship between Effective Workforce Diversity Management and Employees' Performance.
- To recommend the ways to top level people in construction industry regarding how to effectively manage their diversified workforce to get the high performance.

Literature Review

Overview of Construction Industry

The concept of diversity in the context of the construction industry workforce is emerging as an important aspect of human resources management on site and in contractors', architects', consultants' and clients' organizations at all levels (Sweet, 2005). According to Mattis (2002) propose that organizationally diverse practices, programmes and policies are designed as 'best practice' when they are judged by experts to be above and beyond the main stream compared to other organizations, organizations in construction industry should continually benchmark their diversity outcomes against other organizations.

Effective Workforce Diversity Management (EWD)

Effective workforce diversity management is an important emerging concept in the modern world. Various researchers analyzed and researched regarding this concept. Managing diversity involves leveraging and using the cultural differences in people's skills, ideas and creativity to contribute to a common goal, and doing it in a way that gives the organization a competitive edge (Morrison, 1992). It is also argued that, with decreasing homogeneity in the

workforce, it has become crucial for organizations to develop equal opportunities and diversity management policies to maintain the skills of employees with diverse backgrounds in order to protect their competitive position in the marketplace (Gilbert and Ivancevich 2000; Shaw 1993). Diversity management refers to the voluntary organizational actions that are designed to create greater inclusion of employees from various backgrounds into the formal and informal organizational structures through deliberate policies and programs (HaysThomas, 2004; Kaiser & Prange, 2004; Nyambegeera, 2002; Ozbilgin & Tatli, 2008; Palmer, 2003; Palmi, 2001). According to Miebi Ugwuzor (2014), Workforce Diversity Management is the ability of a manager to achieve success for an organization by making the best of use of the similarities and differences among employees. Diversity management can have both positive and negative consequences as well as no change at all and that a more nuanced approach to the link between diversity management and organizational outcomes is in order (Kochan, Bezrukova, Ely, Jackson, & Joshi, 2003; Jackson, Joshi, & Erhardt, 2003; Thomas, 2005). Managing diversity means acknowledging people's differences and recognizing these differences as valuable; it enhances good management practices by preventing discrimination and promoting inclusiveness. Good management alone will not necessarily help you work effectively with a diverse workforce. It is often difficult to see what part diversity plays in a specific area of management. According to [<http://ucsfhr.ucsf.edu/>] (Accessed 25 April 2016) university of California San Francisco].

Conflict

According to Fajana (1995), conflict can be defined as a disagreement between two or more parties who perceive that they have incompatible concerns. It exists whenever an action by one party is perceived as preventing or interfering with the goals, needs or actions of another party. When managers ignore the clash between the co-workers, those clashes will be converted into personal and emotional conflict in the long run and therefore damages the organizational culture, worker morale and overall reduction of employees' performance. A perception of interpersonal incompatibility is labeled as relationship conflict (Hasan, Muhammad and Imran, 2009; Jehn, 1995; Simons, Peterson, 2000). Relationship conflict negatively effects on the team performance and it breaks personal and professional relations. Normally, it occurs between frontline workers and their supervisors. It can reduce creativity, innovation, quality, and performance of employees and organizations (Jehn, 1994, 1995; Amason, 1996; De Dreu & Van de, 1997; Friedman, Cural and Tsai, 2000; Michael et al., 2001; Passos and Caetano, 2005). Organizations that can develop and employ the necessary policies and procedure to maintain competitive advantage among their competitors and reduce the conflict among the employees it may leads to increase their effectiveness. (Rau & Hyland, 2003)

According to Mack(1965), Conflict is a foreseeable authenticity. It may not fade away nor ignored (Michael and Wayne, 2001; Medina, Munduate, Dorado, Martinez and Guerra, 2005). It is found in personal, group or organizational interaction. Conflict is either "good or bad" and "sinful or immoral". It assumes significance, once it is handled intelligently. When conflict is handled unskillfully and badly, it becomes detrimental and when it is handled morally and creatively, it ceases to be frightening and incapacitated, and results in growth, maturity, and empowerment for individual, group and organization. According to Dodd (2003) Organizations are operating in a turbulent (Conflict) business environment where they are searching for measures that will allow them to improve their performance and competitiveness. Conflict is not always negative. It depends on how the conflict is handle. If handled properly, it can become source of development; otherwise it creates hostilities (Kigalai, 2006).

Employees' Performance

Previous research on workplace diversity suggests that diversity can be either detrimental or beneficial for employee performance (Williams and O'Reilly, 1998). For instance, employee diversity is positively associated with creativity and problem-solving skills (Bantel and Jackson, 1989; Jehn et al., 1999) and negatively related with cohesiveness and cooperation (Pelled et al., 1999). Good work force diversity practices in the area of human resources are believed to enhance both employee and organizational performance (Adler, 1986). Furthermore, employee diversity allows increased creativity, a wider range of perspectives, better problem definition, more alternatives and better solutions (Adler, 1986). According to Gilbert and Ivancevich, 2000; Shaw, 1993; Opatha, (2002) indicated that, job performance states how well employee performs tasks, duties and responsibilities of his or her job. Employee performance is the higher in happy and satisfaction workers and the management find it easy to motivate higher performance to attain firm's targets (Kritner et al 2007). Employee performance is everything about the performance of employees in a firm or a company or an organization.

Conceptual Frame work

In this research, a conceptual model aims to set the key concepts in the literature review into a certain framework, which is illustrated in the Figure 1 below. It tries to investigate the relationships between the impacts of effective workforce diversity management and employees performance.

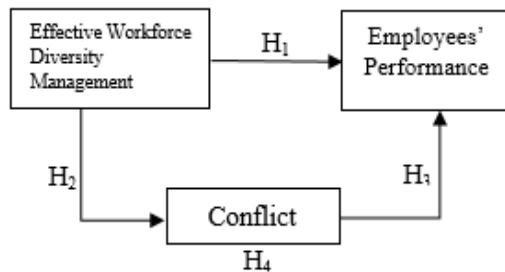


Fig. 1. Model of Effective Workforce Diversity Management and Employees' Performance
Source: Author construction

Data and Methodology/Materials and Methods

The target population of this study is all construction workers in eastern province. Further, researcher clustered the construction companies into district wise moreover, 6 companies were choose from each district also 10 workers were selected from each companies using convenience sampling method. To extend the objectives of research, primary data was analyzed by using descriptive statistical techniques, correlation coefficients analysis, regression analysis and four step model for testing the mediation. And also graphs and tables were used for analytical and interpretation purposes.

The regression analysis presented below aimed to analyze the mediation assessment. According to Baron and Kenny (1986) proposed a four step approach in which several regression analyses should be conducted and significance of the coefficients have to examined at each step.

Step 1: The simple linear regression model presented below was employed to identify the relationship between EWDM predicting EP to test for the path 'c'.

$$EP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 EWDM + \varepsilon$$

Step 2: Below simple linear regression model presented was employed to identify the relationship between EWDM and CN to test for the path 'a'.

$$CN = \beta_0 + \beta_1 EWDM + \varepsilon$$

Step 3: Also the simple linear regression model presented below was employed to identify the relationship between CN and EP to test for the path 'b'.

$$EP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 CN + \varepsilon$$

Step 4: Further, the multiple linear regression model presented below was employed to identify the relationship between EWDM and CN predicting EP to test to identify the direct effect c'.

$$EP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 EWDM + \beta_2 CN + \varepsilon$$

Where, EP = Employees' Performance; EWDM = Effective Workforce Diversity Management; CN = Conflict; β_0 = Intercept of the equation; β_1, β_2 , = slope of the equation; ε = error

Results and Discussion

According to descriptive analysis for demographic factors majority of the workers were males and as a percentage it was 63.52 per cent. When consider age factor, most of the workers have been bought who belongs to 36 – 45 years age group that is 45.3 per cent. By looking at ethnicity distribution for the workers, those three ethnicity group were almost equally distributed. When consider about the educational background distribution, majority of the workers have done their First degree. As a percentage it is 49.7 per cent. When consider about the working period, the highest working period group of workers represented by below 1 year. As a percentage it is 32.1 per cent

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviation of Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Effective Workforce Diversity Management	3.8764	0.66712
Employees' performance	4.0655	0.77376
Conflict	1.5462	1.65885

Source: SPSS output information

The EWDM and the EP accounts mean value and the standard deviation shows that respondents almost agree with the existing situation of EWDM in construction industry while, surprisingly CN does not.

Table 2: Correlations between the Variables

		EWDM	CN	EP
EWDM	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.307	0.719
	Sig		.000	.000
CN	Pearson Correlation	-0.307	1	-0.174
	Sig	.000		.029
EP	Pearson Correlation	0.719	-0.174	1
	Sig	.000	.029	

Source: SPSS output information

Correlation between independent variable 'EWDM' and dependent variable 'EP' implies that there was a strong positive significant ($P < 0.05$) relationship between them. Further, independent variable and mediator 'CN' implies that there was a weak negative significant ($P < 0.05$) relationship between them. Also mediator and dependent variable implies that there was a weak negative significant ($P < 0.05$) relationship between them.

Table 3: Simple Linear Regression between EWDM and EP

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.719 ^a	.517	.514	.53717

a. Predictors: (Constant), EWDM

b. Dependent Variable: EP

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.940	.250		3.765	.000
	EWDM	.821	.063	.719	12.954	.000

a. Dependent Variable: EP

Source: SPSS Output information

Above Table 3 summarizes the results of simple linear regression and it confirms that specified regression model explains only 51.7% (R-square) of the total variation of EP is explained by EWDM. And P value 0.000, which is less than 0.05, suggests that overall, the model applied can statistically significantly predict the dependent variable. Thus, the estimated model can be established as follows.

$$EP = 0.940 + 0.821 \text{ EWDM} + \varepsilon$$

Accordingly, higher the level of Effective Workforce Diversity Management, that will be resulted in an increase of Employees' Performance by 0.821 per unit.

Table 4: Simple Linear Regression between EWDM and CN

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.307 ^a	.094	.088	1.58383		
a. Predictors: (Constant), EWDM						
b. Dependent Variable: Conflict						
Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.475	.736		6.082	.000
	EWDM	-.755	.187	-.307	-4.040	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Conflict						

Source: SPSS Output information

The Table-4 summarizes the results of simple linear regression and it confirms that specified regression model explains only 9.4% (R-square) of the total variation of CN is explained by EWDM. And P value 0.000, which is less than 0.05, suggests that overall, the model applied can statistically significantly predict the dependent variable. Thus, the estimated model can be established as follows.

$$CN = 4.475 - 0.755 \text{ EWDM} + \varepsilon$$

Accordingly, higher the level of Effective Workforce Diversity Management, that will be resulted to reduce of Conflict by - 0.755 per unit.

Table 5: Simple Linear Regression between CN and EP

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.174 ^a	.030	.024	.76089		
a. Predictors: (Constant), Conflict						
b. Dependent Variable: EP						
Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.250	.083		51.447	.000
	Conflict	-.081	.036	-.174	-2.211	.029
a. Dependent Variable: EP						

Source: SPSS Output information

The Table-5 summarizes the results of simple linear regression and it confirms that specified regression model explains only 3% (R-square) of the total variation of EP is explained by CN. And P value 0.000, which is less than 0.05, suggests that overall, the model applied can statistically significantly predict the dependent variable. Thus, the estimated model can be established as follows.

$$EP = 4.250 - 0.081 \text{ CN} + \varepsilon$$

Accordingly, higher the level of CN, that will be resulted to reduce of EP by -0.081 per unit.

Table 6: Multiple Linear Regression among EWDM, CN and EP

Model Summary^b						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.720 ^a	.519	.513	.53754		
a. Predictors: (Constant), Conflict, EWDM						
b. Dependent Variable: EP						
Coefficients^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.832	.278		2.998	.003
	EWDM	.839	.067	.735	12.593	.000
	Conflict	.024	.027	.052	.886	.377
a. Dependent Variable: EP						

Source: SPSS Output information

The Table-6 summarizes the results of multiple linear regression and it confirms that specified regression model explains 52 per cent (R-square) of the total variation of EP is explained by EWDM and CN. And, EWDM is highly significant for the model as its p-value is less than 0.05. While Conflict have insignificant for the model since it's p – value is not less than 0.05 level of significant

Thus, the estimated model can be established as follows.

$$EP = 0.832 + 0.839 \text{ EWDM} + 0.024 \text{ CN} + \epsilon$$

Accordingly, the level of EWDM will be resulted to increase the EP by -0.839 per unit while CN is insignificant.

Mediation Assessment

Table: 7 Four Step Model Analysis

Steps	Paths	Beta (Unstandardize d)	Standard Error	sig
Step 1	c	0.821	0.063	0.000
Step 2	a	-0.755	0.187 ^{Sa}	0.000
Step 3	b	-0.081	0.036 ^{Sb}	0.029
Step 4	c'	0.839	0.067	0.000

S_a – Standard Error of path 'a'

S_b – Standard Error of path 'b'

Source: SPSS Output information

Since c' is significant the strength of the significant should be reduced, then only it will become the partial mediation but according to the above table the strength of the significant was increased. So the CN does not mediate the relationship between EWDM and EP.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to analyze the impact of EWDM on EP and to examine the mediation relationship of CN in between them. The study findings shows EWDM positively influence on EP. It has agree with some previous literature i.e. according to Adler, (1986) Good work force diversity practices in the area of human resources are believed to enhance both employee and organizational performance. Further, Gilbert and Ivancevich, (2000); Shaw, (1993) also had the same opinion regarding this topic. Further this study found CN does not mediate the relationship between EWDM and EP but however, it has the direct negative impact on EP. The same findings have already been discussed in some previous literature, i.e. In case conflict continues, it results in nervousness, rivalry, stress and discontents, which results into reduction in performance of employees in organization. Hasan, Muhammad and Imran, 2009. Further, Pondy, 1967; Max Weber (1929-1947); Robert T. Golembiewski, (2004) also had the same opinion regarding Conflict. Even though this study found the negative relationship between CN and EP some researchers said there is a positive impact of CN on EP, i.e. according to Dodd (2003) Organizations are operating in a turbulent business environment where they are searching for measures that will allow them to improve their performance and competitiveness. Further Kigali, (2006) also had the same opinion about Conflict. Since there was a contradictory argument regarding conflict the future researchers can use this model in different context in order to find the relationship between them.

Conclusion

The study was concluded workers of the construction industry were almost agree with existing situation of Effective Workforce Diversity Management on Employees' Performance in construction sector in eastern province and they are satisfied with that. Moreover it revealed that Employees' Performance will increase as well as Conflict will decrease when leaders manage their diversified workforce effectively but if Conflict occurs the performance of the employees will be reduced further, Conflict was not mediate the relationship between Effective Workforce Diversity Management and Employees' Performance moreover, if they manage their diversified workforce effectively, there is no room for the conflict.

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