



# A Study On Diversity, Equity And Inclusion (DE&I) With Special Reference To The Employees Belonging To Schedule Tribes

Ashesh Kumar Minj

Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, St. Joseph's College, Torpa, Khunti, Jharkhand

**Abstract:** Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, often abbreviated as DE&I, is a term that is used to define values, policies and practices that an organization use to create and maintain an inclusive and diverse environment. The term is used to describe policies and programmes that promote representation and participation of different groups of individuals. It encompasses people of different ages, races, ethnicities, abilities, disabilities, genders, religions, cultures and sexual orientations. It also includes people with diverse backgrounds, experiences, skills and expertise.

The purpose of the paper is to assess the current state of diversity, equity and inclusion, to understand how employees belonging to Schedule Tribes are treated and represented in organizations, and to pinpoint areas of improvement.

To meet the objectives of the research, a Five – Point Likert Scale Questionnaire is prepared. The population for the study is not defined therefore the sampling technique used is Non – Probabilistic Snowball Convenience Sampling.

**Keywords:** Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I), Employee Performance, Organizational Effectiveness, Employee Engagement, Employee Satisfaction.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) in workplace can be traced back to the mid – 1960s, when legal changes and societal movements began to reshape the corporate world. And, the beginning of workplace diversity training marks the introduction of equal employment laws and affirmative action. (Golden, 2024)

DE&I is a framework that aims to promote fair treatment and full participation of all people, especially groups that have been underrepresented or discriminated on the basis of identity or disability. It involves creating a workplace where everyone feels that they are respected regardless of their background. It is policies or set of initiatives designed to make people of various backgrounds feel welcomed and ensured that they have support to perform to the fullest of their abilities in the workplace.

A diverse and inclusive environment is important to have in organizations because it establishes a sense of belonging among employees, makes them feel more connected and productive. It shows consumers and employees that organization is not afraid to give opportunities to all people. Everyone, in organizations, deserves an opportunity to show their skills, and having DE&I gives everyone a chance.

Practicing DE&I is not only pertinent, but is beneficial for organizations as well. This is because 'Diversity allows for new perspectives, equity creates a fair environment and can help to provide opportunities for individuals who need it, and inclusion help employees feel a sense of belonging and understanding'. Organizations that adopt DE&I practices see huge gains in the form of business results, innovation, and decision - making. (Parker, 2022 )

## II. Review of Literature

In his article, Anshuman (2024) emphasized the importance of diversity and inclusion in empowering workplaces. We learn that collective brilliance of talents will fuel innovation and success, and they are keys to unlock the potential. Embracing people from different backgrounds, experiences and ideas can make organizations stronger by providing more innovative team.

Pai (2021) found that hiring diverse workforce increases productivity, and managing both diversity and inclusion enables organization to have smooth functioning. It leaves a positive impact on employees as well. We find that when employees are educated and trained about diversity and inclusion, they are less likely to be negative. Workforce diversity and inclusion in the organization has a greater implication on the performance level of employees as well as the organization diversity management are powerful tools to increase organizational performance and employee satisfaction.

Diversity means similarities and contrasts that exist amongst people, which includes the personality and sense of self. M. K. Ganeshan & Vethirajan C., (2022) identified age, disability, ethnicity, family status, gender, generation, language, physical characteristics, race, religion, belief, sexual orientation and so on as the common dimensions of diversity. Here, we learn that the term diversity is defined according to organizational setting. Equity is identifying and removing barriers to groups who have a disadvantage of receiving equitable treatment. We conclude that organizations that practice DE&I have more chances that their workforce have enhanced employee satisfaction, higher level of trust, and the employees have enhanced engagement. DE&I initiatives create engaged and satisfied employees. It leverages productivity as well. It increases efficiency and effectiveness within the company and raises morale of the employees.

According to Singh (2023), diversity encompasses the differences that exist among individuals in terms of race, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, language, and more. Inclusion focuses on making minority groups feel valued, respected, and treated equally. He pointed the significance of diversity and inclusion at workplace like enriched talent acquisition, foster culture of innovation, better decision making, improved organizational reputation.

In their research, Prabhu. V. K. & Renee Namratha (2019) focussed on impact of gender, age and organizational tenure on employee performance. We find that organizational tenure and cultural diversity have a positive relationship with employee performance. Age diversity has a negative relationship with employee relationship as studies show that people have problems working together because of age difference. Further, we learn that gender diversity has no relationship with employee performance and there are inequalities when different genders work together in organization.

From the study conducted by Saxena (2014), we learn that employing diversified workforce is good as well as challenging to manage for any organization. Having a diversified workforce lead to improved productivity, but can be a disadvantage if not managed carefully. Employing diversified workforce will create issues like language problem, attitude clashes, and difference in perceptions, which is related to human behaviour that will affect the productivity of organizations.

Caste is one of the sensitive topics that is present for a long time in the Indian Society. Employers should take the responsibility for guaranteeing equal treatment for all employees, regardless of caste. They should provide a secure workplace where workers can freely express their concerns about caste discrimination, and prompt action can be taken to address such issues. This will necessitate ongoing monitoring to ensure a workplace free from prejudice. From the blog, we learn that promoting equality, fairness and meritocracy in employment, promotions and rewards can help fight caste – based biases. (IBEF, 2023)

Shivani Wadhwa & Parth Aggarwal (2023) pointed augmented employee engagement, improved employee performance, enriched culture of innovation, bettered decision – making and improved organizational reputation as the significance of diversity and inclusion at workplace. We learn that inclusive culture exists in the workplace when an organizational environment enables people with multiple backgrounds, mindsets and ways of thinking to work effectively together and to perform to their highest potential to achieve organizational objectives based on sound principles. From the study, we also learn that organizations have started coming forward to safeguard the interests of LGBTQ+ to create a holistic and inclusive workplace across the globe. Discrimination, prejudice and ethnocentrism are identified as the most significant barriers to accepting workplace diversity, along with blaming the victim, stereotypes, harassment, and backlash.

Yogita Pant (2020), in her paper said that workforce in organization is constantly battling with issues. Issues which made some believe that inclusion of diversity in the workplace is as simple as meeting the required quotas for employees race and gender. But, truth is far beyond that inclusion of diversity needs acceptance, respect and teamwork despite differences in ‘race, age, gender, native language, political beliefs, religion, sexual orientation or communication styles among employees’. The issue of acceptance and respect, gender equality, generation gap, language, equality arises due to the diversity in the workplace. On the other side we learn that teams with diversification give rise to better performance, which in return adds more profit to the organization. From the paper, we further learn that organizations which are promoters of ethnic and racial diversity in management have chances of more financial returns, problem solving skills and performance get better with diverse teams and workplace diversity leads to innovation. It gives unique perspectives. Practicing diversity and inclusion parallelly indicates a fresh, conducive, safe, and healthier environment where employees found to be more productive.

From the article, written by Wong (2024), a Senior Content Marketing Manager at Achievers, we find that benefits of Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace are larger talent pool, increased employee engagement and trust, new perspectives and innovation, better decision making, improved performance and stronger business results and profits. And, organizations should include community, growth, education and engagement as key pillars in their diversity and inclusion strategy.

### III. Research Problem

From the literature review, we learn that there are advantages in practicing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy in organizations. On the other hand, we learn that the workforce has problems working together because of differences in their ages. Even today, in organizations there exist inequalities when different genders work together and people believe that employing diversified workforce will create issues like language problem, attitude clashes, and differences in perception.

It is also learned that most of the research conducted on diversity, equity and inclusion focused majorly on gender, age, experience or tenure in organization. A few authors worked on people belonging to LGBTQ+, people with disabilities and so on. But studies have overlooked castes, especially Schedule Tribes, when it comes to DE&I efforts. A few papers pointed that diversity increase issues like attitude clashes, difference in perceptions, discrimination, prejudice, ethnocentrism along with stereotypes and inclusion needs

acceptance and respect. Therefore, it becomes pertinent to include caste as one of the factors in diversity, equity and inclusion along with other factors like gender and race.

#### IV. Research Objectives

Following are the objectives behind conducting the research:

1. To assess the current state of diversity, equity and inclusion,
2. To understand how employees belonging to the Schedule Tribes are treated and represented in organizations, and
3. To pinpoint areas of improvement.

#### V. Research Methodology

The paper is about the Study on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) with special reference to the Employees belonging to Schedule Tribes (STs) working in different industries. The reason to undertake this study is to assess the current state of diversity, equity and inclusion, to understand how employees belonging to the Schedule Tribes are treated and represented in organizations, and to pinpoint the areas of improvement.

The study is based on the primary sources of data, which is collected from the employees belonging to Schedule Tribes especially from Jharkhand and are working in different organizations. The primary data is collected through questionnaire, which is designed to meet the above stated objectives of the research paper. Questionnaire prepared for the study is Five Point Likert Scale, which has options from Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The data has been collected through google form. Secondary data, on the other hand, is gathered from sources like journals, research papers, articles, websites, and so on. The sampling technique is non – probabilistic snowball convenience sampling because the population is not defined.

#### VI. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data are collected through Five – Point Likert scale questionnaire, which has options like Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree, and are qualitative in nature. Therefore, to analyze the data, these data are converted to quantitative data. For this, the options are given codes like Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral =3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree = 1.

The research is conducted using questionnaire survey method, and this allowed to gain insight into minds of the respondents. Following are the inferences drawn from the data gathered.

Total number of respondents to the questionnaire is 52 out of which 50% are female and 50% are male.

In the research, working class population belonging to different age groups are targeted to understand the diversity, equity and inclusion practices in organizations. 90.40% of the respondents are between the age group 25 – 35 and 9.60% of the respondents are between 35 – 45 years. There are no respondents below the age 25 years, between 45 - 55 years and 55 – 65 years.

1. When asked that do the respondents believe that their company's diversity and inclusion initiatives are successful, then 11.50% of the respondents strongly agreed and 57.70% of the respondents agreed. While, 11.50% of the respondents were neutral, 15.40% of the respondents disagreed and 3.80% of the respondents strongly disagreed. This implies that diversity and inclusion efforts are successful in majority of the organization.

2. When asked that does their company's promotion and appraisal policy supports diversity, equity and inclusion, then 9.60% of the respondents strongly agreed and 50% of the them agreed. While, 21.20% of the respondents were neutral, 15.40% disagreed and 3.80% strongly disagreed. This implies that in most of the companies the evaluation process is free of privileges, biases, favouritism, prejudices, or discrimination.
3. When asked that does their company hire individuals belonging to Scheduled Tribes, then 21.20% of the respondents strongly agreed and 50% of the respondents agreed. While, 15.40% were neutral, 7.70% disagreed and 5.80% strongly disagreed. This means majority of the companies hiring process is free from unconscious biases.
4. On being asked that do they feel comfortable discussing diversity and inclusion with their manager and co – workers, then 21.20% of the respondents strongly agreed and 38.50% of the respondents agreed. While, 19.20% of the respondents were neutral, 15.40% disagreed and 5.80% strongly disagreed. This indicates that most of the respondents are comfortable discussing about diversity and inclusion without fear of discrimination. They feel comfortable discussing about controversial topics as well.
5. When asked that do the respondent feel that their co – workers are open to different perspectives, then to this 13.50% of the respondents strongly agreed and 44.20% of the respondents agreed. While, 26.90% of the respondents were neutral, 11.50% of the respondents disagreed and 3.80% of the respondents strongly disagreed. This implies that in most of the workplace employees treat one another with respect.
6. When asked that does their company promotes and protects all diversity areas (race, nationality, gender diversity, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability status, and religion) equally, then 17.30% of the respondents strongly agreed and 57.70% of the respondents agreed. While, 15.40% of the respondents were neutral, 5.80% of the respondents agreed and 3.80% of the respondents strongly disagreed. This indicates that majority of the companies protect and respects the values of all groups of employees.
7. When asked do they notice favouritism within their company, then 23.10% of the respondents strongly agreed and 34.60% of the respondents agreed. While, 25% of the respondents were neutral, 15.40% of the respondents disagreed and 1.90% of the respondents strongly disagreed. This implies that in a few companies, employees in leadership positions distribute their opportunities and promotes inclusion.
8. When asked that do the respondent feel valued for their work regardless of their caste, then 26.90% of the respondents strongly agreed and 42.30% of the respondents agreed. While, 15.40% of the respondents were neutral, 13.50% of the respondents disagreed and 1.90% of the respondents strongly disagreed. This means that majority of companies respect and value its employees regardless of caste.
9. When asked about leadership commitment to workplace equity, then 17.30% of the respondents strongly agreed and 46.20% of the respondents agreed. While, 23.10% of the respondents were neutral, 11.50% of the respondents disagreed and 1.90% of the respondents strongly disagreed. This indicates that managers in a few companies need additional equity training or support to ensure that everyone is treated the same without discrimination.
10. Upon asked that whether they have witnessed unconscious biases within the workplace culture, then 9.60% of the respondents strongly agreed and 46.20% of the respondents agreed. While, 26.90% of the respondents were neutral, 15.40% of the respondents disagreed and 1.90% of the respondents strongly disagreed. This implies that a few of the respondents find that their workplace is free from biases.
11. When asked that if they make a mistake at work, then do they feel that it is unfairly held against them then 5.80% of the respondents strongly agreed and 15.40% of the respondents agreed. While, 30.80% of the respondents were neutral, 42.30% of the respondents disagreed and 5.80% of the respondents strongly disagreed. This means that in majority of organization mistakes at work are provided opportunities for self – improvement. They are handled with understanding and empathy to build a more collaborative, outspoken, and long – lasting team.
12. When asked that does the people they work with treat each other with respect irrespective of caste, then 21.20% of the respondents strongly agreed and 55.80% of the respondents agreed. While, 13.50% of the respondents were neutral, 3.80% of the respondents disagreed and 5.80% of the respondents strongly disagreed. This indicates that in majority of organizations employees and employers respect each other

to promote a culture of inclusion within workplace in which employees are loyal, engaged, fulfilled, and motivated to do their best.

13. When asked whether they see themselves growing in their current company, then 11.50% of the respondents strongly agreed and 48.10% of the respondents agreed. While, 21.20% of the respondents were neutral, 15.40% disagreed and 3.80% of the respondents strongly disagreed. This implies that respondents are satisfied with their job and employee retention is high due to the implementation of diversity measures at work.
14. On being asked that does their company welcomes and celebrates unique characteristics, then 19.20% of the respondents strongly agreed and 42.30% of the respondents agreed. While, 30.80% of the respondents were neutral, 5.80% of the respondents disagreed and 1.90% of the respondents strongly disagreed. This means that a few respondents feel valued and seen. It also indicates that employee engagement, employee productivity, retention and happiness is high in those organizations.
15. When asked whether inclusivity is one of their company's most important values, then 13.50% of the respondents strongly agreed and 44.20% of respondents agreed. While, 32.70% of the respondents were neutral, 7.70% of the employees disagreed and 1.90% of the respondents strongly disagreed. This indicates that workplace inclusivity is good and chances of respondents leaving their organization is low.
16. When asked that whether they have faced discrimination or microaggressions in their workplace, then 7.70% of the respondents strongly agreed and 25% of the respondents agreed. While, 25% of the respondents were neutral, 28.80% of them disagreed and 13.50% of them strongly disagreed. This means that majority of the respondents have not faced discrimination or microaggressions in their organization.
17. When asked whether their company provides enough support for employees belonging to Scheduled Tribes, then 9.60% of the respondents strongly agreed and 38.50% of them agreed. While, 28.80% of the respondents were neutral, 19.20% of them disagreed and 3.80% of them strongly disagreed. This implies that most of the respondents do not get support from their organization whenever required.
18. On being asked whether HR creatively sources candidates from Schedule Tribes, then 3.80% of the respondents strongly agreed and 21.20% of them agreed. While, 44.20% of the respondents were neutral, 25% of them disagreed and 5.80% of them strongly disagreed. This means that organization need to look into the hiring process of HR. In order to go out of their way, company need to hire people from different backgrounds and cultures. This will increase their workforce talents, skills, experiences and thought processes.
19. When asked that whether management practices transparency in all aspects, including pay, opportunities and promotions, then 17.30% of the respondents strongly agreed and 30.80% of them agreed. While, 25% of the respondents were neutral, 23.10% of them disagreed and 3.80% of them strongly disagreed. This determines that majority of the respondents feel that managers communicate well with their teams. The respondents feel comfortable expressing their opinions or providing feedback on a task or an executive decision.
20. On being asked whether improvement can be made to their company's diversity, equity and inclusivity efforts, then 38.50% of the respondents strongly agreed and 48.10% of them agreed. While, 11.50% of the respondents were neutral and 1.90% of them disagreed. This determines that majority of the respondents feel that improvements should be made to diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) efforts.

## VII. Findings

1. From the data analysis, it is found that in most of the organizations the diversity efforts are successful.
2. Most of the organizations have diverse workforce and companies hire employees belonging to Schedule Tribe as well. Employees belonging to Scheduled Tribes feel comfortable discussing about diversity and inclusion with their manager and co – workers as they are open to different perspectives. Their company promotes and protects all diversity areas (race, nationality, gender diversity, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability status, and religion) equally.
3. Although, organizations have successful diversity efforts, their equity efforts are low as a few of the respondent noticed favouritism and witnessed biases in their organization. But, in a few organization employees feel valued, their leaders show commitment to workplace equity and employees treat each other with respect.
4. Most of the organizations have high belongingness efforts as respondents see themselves growing in their company, and the companies welcomes and celebrates their unique characteristics. However, in a few organizations, employees feel discriminated and face microaggressions, which implies that their organizations have low belongingness efforts.
5. Majority of the respondents feel that their company does not provide support for employees belonging to Scheduled Tribe. HR does not sources candidates from Scheduled Tribes. They find that there is no transparency in all aspects including, pay, opportunities and promotions. This indicates that inclusion efforts are low in organizations.
6. Majority of the respondents feel that improvements can be made to company's diversity, equity and inclusivity efforts.
7. From the survey, we find that organizations have a diverse workforce however, the equity and inclusion efforts are low. Most of the employees belonging to Schedule Tribes do not feel that they are treated equally, and have a feeling that they are not included in the organization.

## VIII. Suggestions

1. Organizations should develop a strategy to publicly or privately recognize employees without biases. Organizations can organize rewards and recognition programme to acknowledge their employees.
2. Managers can be given additional equity training or support to ensure that everyone in the organization is treated the same without discrimination.
3. To enhance the equity efforts, leadership positions should distribute the opportunities.
4. Leaders should assure the employee that they focus on solving the problem rather than unfairly holding the blame against them.
5. Organizations should work on their workplace inclusivity.
6. Companies should provide support to the employees belonging to Scheduled Tribes whenever required.
7. HR should hire employees belonging to Scheduled Tribes as this will increase the workforce's talents, skills, experiences and thought processes.
8. Transparency must be maintained in all aspects including pay, opportunities and promotions. These opportunities can be displaced on the notice board, websites and so on.

## IX. Conclusion

Diversity, equity and inclusion has become one of the important practices in any organization. Implementing policies related to diversity, equity and inclusion not only diversify the workforce but benefits the organization. It helps in attracting talents, promotes employee engagement leading to employee satisfaction, which further improves employees' performance. When employees feel valued and included, they stay in their organization for a long term. The practice enhances the overall performance of organizations, too.

From the study we conclude that most of the employees belonging to Schedule Tribe are happy and satisfied with diversity, equity and inclusion practices and feel that they are treated and represented well in their organization. But a few are not happy and satisfied with practices. Although, organizations have successful diversity efforts but, their equity and inclusion efforts are low. A few of the respondents belonging to Schedule Tribes do not feel treated and represented well in their organization. Therefore, organizations should make policies and framework to include employees from all areas. They should create an inclusive environment and treat their workforce equally.

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