Employee Insights on Workforce Diversity and Job Performance in Nepalese Public Enterprises

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Article History

Received 29 Jan, 2025 Reviewed 05 March, 2025 Revised 14 March, 2025 Accepted 25 March, 2025

Keywords

Demographic traits, Employee insights, Job performance, Public enterprises, Workforce diversity



Kshitiz Management Review

Volume 1, Issue 1, April 2025, pp. 21-34. ISSN: 3059-975X (Print)

Abstract

This study explores how workforce diversity influences employee performance in Nepalese public enterprises. Using descriptive and explanatory research methods, it examines diversity traits and their effect on job performance. A stratified random sample of 200 respondents from four public enterprises was selected, with 50 selfadministered questionnaires distributed in each. Findings indicate that employees perceive significant demographic diversity, with relatively less diversity in educational and professional backgrounds but notable socioeconomic diversity. Diverse regional representation enhances cultural inclusion, contributing positively to workforce dynamics and job performance. The study concludes that workforce diversity positively affects job performance, with socioeconomic diversity showing the strongest impact. Employees from varied economic backgrounds significantly enhance workplace success. Demographic diversity, including age, gender, and ethnicity, along with geographic diversity, also positively influence job performance. However, diversity in educational qualifications and professional experience shows a weaker effect, indicating that these traits may not be as critical as others in influencing job performance. This research highlights the importance of embracing workforce diversity to optimize employee performance and organizational success.

Introduction

Nepal has a multilingual and multiethnic population (Shrestha, 2020). Employees in Nepalese enterprises come from various religious, cultural, caste, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. Thus, Nepal's workforce diversity is noteworthy. How well businesses can handle this variety is an issue in Nepalese workplaces. Workforce diversity is the state that arises when members of

an organization differ from one another in demographic characteristics such as age, sex, race, ethnicity, immigration, and education. As more women and minorities enter the workforce, the idea of diversity is starting to permeate business operations. Several companies have strategically chosen to invest in a diverse workforce to increase productivity and maintain a competitive edge, in addition to concerns about morality, ethics, and legal enforcement (Erhardt, 2003). In today's context, the workforce has become significantly more diverse due to a variety of factors. Globalization, aging populations, the entry of women and minorities into new professions, knowledge-based workers, work teams, virtual workers, and part-time or contingent employees are just a few of the many factors that have contributed to a much more diverse workforce (Agrawal, 2016; Adhikari & Shrestha, 2019).

Equal employment opportunity laws, organizational initiatives motivated by business necessity, and labor market trends can all be influenced by the extent of diversity in businesses (Jackson & Alvarez, 1992, Joshi, 2006). Early conceptions of diversity typically considered demographic factors including gender and race at work (Ashkanasy et al., 2002). According to Erhardt (2003), as organizational diversity research progressed, two broad contrasts between observable and non-observable diversity traits emerged. The first is surface-level variety, which includes visible traits like gender, age, race, and ethnicity. Typically, these characteristics fall under the category of quantifiable diversity. The non-observable traits, sometimes referred to as deep-level variety, come next (Boeker, 1997; Watson et al., 1998; Kilduff et al., 2000; Ostergaard et al., 2011). These comprise knowledge, education, beliefs, cognition, affection, and personality.

Diversity in the workforce is a significant aspect that affects worker performance (Khan et al., 2019). Managing such diversity has been a priority for many businesses, including public enterprises, to improve employee performance and organizational productivity. Prior studies show a positive relationship between workforce diversity and employee job performance. Enterprises that consider diversity to be an integral component of their strategy rather than a cost will reap far more benefits than those that do not. Organizations that consider diversity see an improvement in their performance. Businesses that embrace diversity as a key component of their strategy would benefit from lower turnover costs and increased revenues far more than those that do not (Brown & Lam, 2008). According to Choi (2007), when individuals within enterprises can appreciate and understand one another as well as utilize one another's experiences, abilities, and viewpoints, diversity helps them achieve synergistic success.

Diversity in the workforce has become a crucial component of organizational efficiency, especially for public enterprises that cater to a wide range of demographics. Differences in gender, age, ethnicity, educational background, and professional experiences are all examples of workplace diversity, and they all add to a vibrant and complex work environment.

Organizations have been more aware of the potential advantages of diversity in recent years, including more creativity, better decision-making, and increased flexibility in the face of change. Effectively managing diversity is still difficult, though, because disparities in viewpoints and working methods can often result in miscommunications and disputes.

In the context of Nepalese public enterprises, workforce diversity is particularly relevant due to the country's rich cultural and ethnic composition. Public enterprises, which offer vital services and job opportunities in a variety of industries, are vital to the growth of the national economy. Moreover, the public services today have excellent and open policies regarding workforce diversity, inclusion, and reservation in Nepal. The same recruitment approach has been used by government agencies such as the Nepal Telecom Authority, Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), Nepal Army, Nepal Police, Arm Police Force of Nepal, Central Bank, and government-owned enterprises. To increase diversity and inclusion in the Nepalese civil service, the government of Nepal implemented the reservation policy in 2007 (Lamichhane, 2021). Diversity in the workplace is primarily motivated by the advantages it offers the organization, particularly in terms of creativity and innovation. These days, a company's strengths are seen as the collaboration of cultures, ideas, and different viewpoints. Diversity lowers the cost of staff turnover, and productivity losses from absenteeism, and helps the firm reach its strategic goals and objectives.

Embracing diversity empowers organizations to foster a unique and inclusive culture, where varied perspectives spark creativity and drive innovation. This environment encourages the development of groundbreaking products and services that cater to diverse audiences, enhancing both societal impact and business success. Diversity becomes a catalyst for progress and a cornerstone of sustainable growth. (https://kathmandupost.com/opinion/2018/06/22/diversity-inworkplace). Talking about the main characteristics of a diverse workforce in Nepalese public enterprises, gender diversity, ethnic and caste diversity, regional and linguistic diversity, religious diversity, educational and professional background, age and generational diversity, and disability inclusion are the key traits.

Although workforce diversity is becoming increasingly important, little is known about how it affects employee job performance in Nepalese public enterprises. Employees' opinions on diversity can offer insightful viewpoints on how participation, equity, and inclusivity affect their motivation and productivity at work. Based on these discussions, this paper aims to investigate the influence of workforce diversity traits and employee performance in Nepalese public enterprises.

Literature Review

Conceptualizing Workforce Diversity

All enterprises must embrace workforce diversity because each member of a diverse team has unique skills, abilities, and competencies that can enhance their performance (Khan et al., 2019). Workforce diversity is the existence of workers with a range of traits, experiences, and backgrounds in a company. Gender, age, ethnicity, race, religion, social status, education, language, abilities, sexual orientation, and cultural viewpoints are all examples of these distinctions. Moreover, workplace diversity refers to the differences among employees that may impact a role or relationship, such as age, gender, ethnicity, and educational background. In a stable, accepting, and caring setting, these distinctions are revealed (Ehimare & Ogaga-Oghene, 2011).

Workforce diversity is the coexistence of individuals from various cultural origins inside an organization (Kochan et al., 2003). It is the recognition and acceptance of differences among members of a certain group, organization, or community. It covers a wide range of characteristics, such as economic status, gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, faith, and handicap. Diversity causes the workforce to be diverse depending on employee differences (Ehimare & Ogaga-Oghene, 2011). It is a technique that encourages the integration of human variations and the application of inclusion and diversity policies as guidelines in the workplace (Alghazo & Al Shaiban, 2016). Diversity brings a range of perspectives and methods to the workplace, which fosters creativity, innovation, and problem-solving. By encouraging inclusivity, boosting decision-making, and increasing adaptation in a diverse workplace, workforce diversity can have an impact on employee performance in Nepalese public enterprises.

Conceptualizing Job Performance

Job performance is the ratio of output to input (Dahanayake, 2020; Al-Habib, 2020; Saeed & Asghar, 2012). It is the act of carrying out a duty; putting into action a recognizable action, accomplishment, or accomplishment (Shrestha, 2013, 2016; Shrestha et al., 2024). Organizational culture and climate, job security, compensation, incentives, and job satisfaction are just a few of the many organizational aspects that affect employee job performance. Employee performance is reflected in the actions and inactions of the employee (Schehar, 2013). Executing a task, implementing plans, reaching objectives, or achieving identifiable outcomes are all considered forms of job performance of employees in an organization. Such performance is the successful completion of tasks to achieve desired results. Job performance includes the degree to which an employee satisfies the demands of the position (Kyalo & Gachunga, 2015). Evaluations of employee performance are based on many organizational factors including performance evaluations, productivity, efficiency, and work quality. Organizational factors (wages, job security, and job satisfaction) and the organization's surroundings are thought to have an impact on job performance (Dahanayake, 2020; Al-Habib, 2020). Achieving company goals is largely dependent on effective performance (Usmani et al., 2022; Nnadi & Chinedu, 2019). A method for managing employee performance at work should be impartial and pertinent to the position as well as the organization's strategic goals and objectives. Since the performance of an organization is directly related to the performance of its individual members, workforce diversity at the employee level has a direct impact on the advancement and growth of that organization (Ehilebo et al., 2022).

Impact of Workforce Diversity Traits on Job Performance

Diversity in the workforce has a big impact on how well employees perform on the job. It influences communication, creativity, team dynamics, and workplace culture. Employee engagement and productivity in Nepalese public companies can be impacted by diversity, which can present both possibilities and challenges. Indeed, one of the most important factors affecting job performance in organizations is the diversity of the workforce. Employee cooperation, creativity, and production in Nepalese public companies can all be affected by diversity. This section discusses key diversity traits and their hypothesized relationships with job performance.

Demographic Diversity (Gender, Age, Ethnicity, Religion) and Job Performance

Different demographic backgrounds enhance innovation and decision-making by bringing a variety of opinions to the table. However, if diversity is not handled, it can cause problems with communication and conflict (Cox & Blake, 1991). As a key demographic trait, diversity in gender promotes creativity, balanced decision-making, and enhanced team performance. By guaranteeing that different viewpoints are considered, diverse gender representation promotes inclusivity and lessens groupthink. As a key trait, age diversity fosters knowledge sharing, mentorship, and team learning because younger workers provide technology capabilities and older workers add experience (Kunze et al., 2011). Moreover, diversity in ethnicity fosters creativity, cultural sensitivity, and adaptability to international markets (Richard et al., 2007). Ethnic differences that are not controlled, however, might result in disputes and discrimination at work. Furthermore, religious diversity can promote cultural inclusion, good decision-making, and workplace harmony (McMillan-Capehart, 2003). Thus, in Nepalese public enterprises, demographic diversity plays a key role in determining employee performance. Even though

diversity encourages creativity, collaboration, and cultural sensitivity, companies must put inclusive policies, diversity training, and objective HR procedures into place to minimize problems and optimize the advantages of having a varied staff. Considering these discussions, the following hypothesis was developed for this study:

H1: Demographic diversity (gender, age, ethnicity, religion) significantly influences job performance in Nepalese public enterprises.

Educational and Professional Background Diversity and Job Performance

Diversity in educational and professional backgrounds describes differences in the training, abilities, academic credentials, and previous job experiences of individuals. Employees in Nepalese public companies have a variety of educational backgrounds, specializations, and career routes, which affects their decision-making skills, work styles, and ability to adjust to the objectives of the company. When handled well, variety can promote creativity, efficiency, and information exchange. Employees with diverse educational and professional backgrounds bring varied problem-solving approaches and innovation (Jehn et al., 1999; Becker, 1964; Barney, 1991). However, disparities in knowledge levels may lead to conflicts. In this regard, this study formulated the following hypothesis:

H2: Educational and professional background diversity positively influences job performance in Nepalese public enterprises.

Socioeconomic Diversity and Job Performance

Employees from different socioeconomic contribute unique insights, enhancing organizational effectiveness (Harrison & Klein, 2007). The diverse social networks, educational backgrounds, and financial backgrounds of employees give rise to socioeconomic diversity. Companies that hire people from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds gain access to a variety of viewpoints and life experiences, which fosters innovation and improves problem-solving skills (Aguinis & O'Boyle, 2014). Studies show that diverse socioeconomic backgrounds among employees contribute distinct viewpoints that encourage creativity (Richard et al., 2003). It is also found that employees from diverse economic backgrounds frequently display a range of coping strategies and flexibility (González & DeNisi, 2009). Furthermore, employers can better understand and serve a wider spectrum of customers by having a diverse workforce (Harrison et al., 2002). In this regard, this study formulated the following hypothesis:

H3: Socioeconomic diversity positively influences job performance in Nepalese public enterprises.

Geographic Diversity and Job Performance

A geographically diverse workforce includes employees with diverse backgrounds, cultures, and work surroundings. Companies with staff from different geographic locations have access to more comprehensive market knowledge and improved problem-solving skills (Gelfand et al., 2007). Studies show that geographic diversity facilitates the effective operation of multinational corporations in a variety of marketplaces (Lauring & Selmer, 2012). Moreover, workers from various geographical areas contribute a range of knowledge, abilities, and professional experiences that enhance decision-making (Hofstede, 2001). It is also found that a workforce that is more inclusive and flexible is produced by exposure to diverse cultural and geographical viewpoints (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000). Considering these discussions, the following hypothesis was developed for this study:

H4: Geographic diversity positively influences job performance in Nepalese public enterprises.

Research Methods

The study used a descriptive and explanatory research method to describe the extent of workforce diversity in Nepalese public enterprises and analyze the influence of diversity traits (e.g., demographic, educational & professional background, socioeconomic, and geographic diversity) on job performance.

A stratified random sample was used to ensure representation across the different business functions and hierarchical levels of four public enterprises in Nepal (Nepal Airlines Corporation, Nepal Telecom, Agriculture Development Bank, and Nepal Bank Ltd.). A total of 50 self-administered surveys were distributed in each of these four public enterprises, totaling 200 respondents. However, only 147 (73.50%) of the completed questionnaires were returned and utilized for data analysis. The questionnaire was constructed using a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree." The demographic traits of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Workforce diversity traits were the independent variables. They included demographic diversity (gender, age, ethnicity, and religion), educational & professional background diversity (level of education, field of study, industry experience, and work tenure), socioeconomic diversity (economic background, social class), and geographic diversity (regional and cultural differences). Job performance was the dependent variable.

The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as the mean and standard deviation (S.D.). In a similar vein, this study examined the influence of workforce diversity traits on job performance using a multi-regression model.

Table 1

Demographic Traits of the Participants

Age distribution	Frequency	Percent	
Young workforce	51	34.69	
Middle-aged workforce	67	45.58	
Senior workforce	29	19.73	
Educational background			
Postgraduate and above	44	29.93	
Undergraduate degree holders	74	50.34	
Diploma and below	29	19.73	
Gender composition			
Male employees	95	64.63	
Female employees	52	35.37	
Ethnic and caste diversity			
Bahun-Chhetri (Hill Brahmin & Kshatriya)	57	38.78	
Janajati (indigenous groups)	48	32.65	
Madhesi and Dalit communities	28	19.05	
Other ethnic groups	14	9.524	
Socioeconomic diversity			
Higher socioeconomic status	58	39.46	
Middle socioeconomic status	66	44.9	
Lower socioeconomic status	23	15.65	
Geographic diversity			
Regional representation:			
Kathmandu Valley (Central Region)	73	49.66	
Eastern and western hills	29	19.73	
Terai (southern plains)	30	20.41	
Mountainous and remote areas	15	10.2	
Rural-urban employment split:			
Urban employees	103	70.07	
Rural employees	44	29.93	

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Study Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 displays the means, standard deviation (S.D.), and reliability statistics (Cronbach's alpha) for every variable used in this study. The results show that the socioeconomic diversity dimension has the highest diversity perception, indicating that employees come from varied economic and social backgrounds. Employees acknowledge the strong presence of individuals from different geographic regions in the workplace. In terms of demographic diversity, employees recognize a high level of diversity in terms of age, gender, and ethnicity.

Table 2Descriptive Statistics

Workforce diversity traits	Mean	S.D.	Reliability
Demographic diversity	3.95	0.68	0.78
Educational & professional background diversity	3.47	0.63	0.83
Socioeconomic diversity	4.02	0.77	0.79
Geographic diversity	3.97	0.47	0.87
Job performance	4.08	0.51	0.84

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Turning to educational and professional background diversity, this is the lowest-scoring diversity trait, implying that there is less variation in employees' academic and professional backgrounds compared to other diversity dimensions. When talking about job performance, employees report relatively high job performance, suggesting that they perceive themselves as productive and efficient.

Influence of Workforce Diversity Traits on Job Performance

A multiple regression analysis was employed in this study to assess the influence of workforce diversity traits on job performance.

 Table 3

 Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		В	SE	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)		18.913	1.136		16.651	0.000
Demographic diversity		0.286	0.068	0.325	4.201	0.000
Educational professional background diversity	&	0.124	0.079	0.192	1.571	0.040
Socioeconomic diversity		0.491	0.085	0.674	5.752	0.000
Geographic diversity		0.380	0.343	0.283	4.025	0.000

R = 0.727; $R^2 = 528$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.515$; F = 39.73; p = 0.00

Dependent variable: Job Performance

Note: **p<0.01. *p<0.05

Source: Field Survey, 2024

This regression model examines the effect of four diversity traits (demographic, educational & professional background, socioeconomic, and geographic diversity) on job performance. The results show a strong positive correlation exists between the diversity traits and job performance (R = 0.727) and 52.8% of the variance in job performance is explained by the four diversity

dimensions ($R^2 = 0.528$). The results also show that the model is statistically significant (F = 39.73, p < 0.01), meaning the diversity traits collectively influence job performance.

Turning to influences of diversity traits on job performance, the results show that demographic diversity is significant ($\beta = 0.325$, p = 0.000), meaning workforce diversity in terms of age, gender, and ethnicity positively contributes to performance. Educational and professional background diversity is also statistically significant (p = 0.04), implying that variations in education and work experience may improve job performance. The results also show that socioeconomic diversity has the strongest impact ($\beta = 0.674$, p = 0.000) on job performance, suggesting that employees from diverse economic backgrounds bring significant performance benefits. Finally, the results show that geographic diversity is a moderate predictor ($\beta = 0.283$, p = 0.000), indicating employees from diverse locations enhance job performance. These all supports H1, H2, H3 and H4.

Discussion

The findings indicate that the greatest positive influence on job performance comes from socioeconomic diversity. Such findings suggest that employees with varying socioeconomic origins provide special views, problem-solving skills, and competencies that boost workplace efficiency. Employees from different socioeconomic origins may exhibit distinct work ethics, resilience, and flexibility, all of which have an impact on overall performance (Richard et al., 2003; González & DeNisi, 2009; Aguinis & O'Boyle, 2014). This finding supports the human capital theory, which contends that a range of backgrounds and experiences improves organizational creativity, efficiency, and decision-making. A wider variety of methods for problem-solving and work attitudes may result from socioeconomic diversity, which would enhance overall organizational performance. Additionally, there is a statistically substantial favorable impact of demographic diversity on work performance. This suggests that a workforce rich in a variety of age groups, genders, ethnic backgrounds, and life experiences enhances job effectiveness (Cox & Blake, 1991; Kunze et al., 2011). Policies for diversity and inclusion that encourage a fair representation of various demographic groups should be put into place by organizations. Programs for underrepresented groups to build their leadership skills can also improve the performance contributions of employees.

The influence of geographic diversity on job performance is moderate yet noteworthy. Employees from both urban and rural locations contribute a variety of experiences, viewpoints, and expertise that enhance overall performance (Gelfand et al., 2007; Lauring & Selmer, 2012; Hofstede, 2001; Earley & Mosakowski, 2000). To facilitate successful staff integration, organizations can promote hiring from a geographically diversified pool and provide training courses. Rotational work placements between regions can also improve performance and the

exchange of skills. It is interesting to note that differences in professional and educational backgrounds also statistically significantly predict job performance (Jehn et al., 1999; Becker, 1964; Barney, 1991). This implies that performance may be impacted by differences in work experiences and educational backgrounds. Therefore, enterprises should prioritize crossfunctional training and mentorship programs over merely hiring staff with a variety of educational backgrounds to foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing among staff members with varying specialties.

Conclusion and Implications

Workforce diversity is strategically importance in Nepalese public enterprises. Since socioeconomic and demographic diversity have the biggest positive effects on job performance, public enterprises should concentrate on increasing these aspects of their workforce. Using national recruitment tactics to promote regional diversity can somewhat enhance job performance. To optimize the potential benefit of educational and professional diversity, training, and team integration initiatives should be combined with it. Finally, establishing an inclusive workplace that guarantees workers from a variety of backgrounds may successfully contribute to the success of the enterprises should be the main goal of HR policies.

This report emphasizes how crucial diversity management is as a top strategic objective. To foster diversity in terms of demographics, socioeconomic backgrounds, and geographic representation, organizations should create inclusive recruiting practices. HR departments should concentrate on having a balanced staff, making sure that diversity is not only a requirement for compliance but also a performance enhancer. It is recommended that organizations adopt collaborative work methods that allow diverse personnel to engage, exchange ideas, and gain knowledge from one another. For various groups to be treated fairly, reasonable compensation plans and possibilities for career progression should be put in place.

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