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WORKFORCE DIVERSITY ENHANCING EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISE IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to highlight workforce diversity in employee performance practice in Pakistan's small and medium enterprises. There is a significantly larger need for a diverse workforce in Pakistani SMEs because SMEs developing their positive contribution to sustaining a Pakistan economy and workforce diversifying the private sector in employment. The influence of diversity involves gender, age, education, and ethnic diversity to improve employee performance. This quantitative research used a survey method to collect data from 120 employees employed in SMEs in Pakistan. The study findings established the significant contribution of training for workforce diversity and employee performance is important for SMEs to solve work-related problems. Initially, employees need to understand the diverse system at SMEs for better team building to accomplish of a task. The statistical results also support the significant association of skills training and team building for task completion. The current study examines the significant challenges to workforce diversity top dimensions of gender, age, education, and ethnicity offer suggestions on how to improve workforce diversity and employee performance. This research is addressing workforce diversity and employee relations in small and medium-sized enterprises in Pakistan, and for better performance, SMEs in Pakistan must concentrate on giving staff tasks and training that are relevant to those tasks. The research influence that all the top four dimensions of workforce diversity (gender, age, education, ethnicity) have a positive correlation with employee performance in a Pakistani small-medium size enterprise. As a result, SMEs must operate workforce diversity to improve employee performance.

Keywords: Diversity, influence, Practice, Pakistan small and medium enterprises.

INTRODUCTION

Recent workforce integration studies highlight key concerns with small medium-sized enterprises in Pakistan to promote diversity and inclusion. Researchers are concerned about how SMEs management diversity and inclusion initiatives may encourage different sorts (Xu and Abbasov 2021). The key issue in the regulation of equality and diversity and human resource development will allow small firms to get a useful advantage and this will lead to better performance (Schlogl, 2004). For example, what happens if the employee is unable to be defined and controlled in terms of age, gender, or education as a specific type of person, as distinct from others?

Pakistan's economy is based on SMEs. They make up most of Pakistan's business landscape. The structure of Pakistan's SME sector best reflects the reality of the country's economic outlook. As a result, it is critical to properly define different forms of SMEs and to include diverse types of businesses (including small local businesses or partnerships) under one broad definition (Dar, Ahmed, & Raziq 2020). SMEs provide a significant contribution to the economy's success and growth (Ali Shah Syed et al. 2012). According to a large-scale study of global Fortune 500 firms and other worldwide organizations (Dunavant and Heiss, 2005), 100% of questioned enterprises consider global diversity to be an important or extremely significant problem.

THE IMPORTANT OF SMES IN PAKISTAN

The contribution of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to economic growth has been widely acknowledged in developing and industrialized countries (Abdullah 2000). Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are an essential component of Pakistan's economy. According to recent estimates by the Small & Medium Enterprise Development Authority (SMEDA) there are more than 5 million SMEs in Pakistan. SMEs contribute 40% of the GDP of Pakistan and 25% to overall exports. After Agriculture sector, SME sector provides employment to highest percentage of working population in the country. SME sector contributes to 78 % of nonagricultural sector employment. SMEs are one of the main sources to reduce poverty, and expand national economy and job creation (SMEDA, 2022). Pakistan has over 3.2 million commercial developments. Firms retain up to 99 people and account for more than 90 percent of all private enterprises in the industrial sector (Bhutta et al. 2007; Kureshi et al. 2009; Memon et al 2010).

The significance of SMEs to the global economy is universally acknowledged, despite different definitions throughout the world (Birch 1989; Storey 1994). One key feature of small and medium-sized enterprises is that they provide a significant source of employment. SMEs (companies with 200 or less people) constitute the largest corporate sector in every global economy (Culkin & Smith 2000), and SMEs' growth is gradually becoming part of national development plans throughout the world (Abdullah & bin Bakar 2000). In comparison to South-Asian countries, where SMEs are successfully achieving their share in international markets, SMEs in Pakistan are facing issues and challenges. For example, there are 85% of Taiwanese SMEs export their final products and contribute 90% of total exports, while there are only a few sectors in Pakistan where SMEs can capture substantial international market share. It is difficult for Pakistani SMEs to understand global markets due to problem of workforce diversity, to understand the dynamics of international markets, to access channels, and to determine which channels are relevant to them. Due to the traditional business patterns in Pakistan and the influence of the family on SMEs, it is problematic for SMEs to modify their business strategies quickly based on business conditions.

The proliferation of national legislation and international rules aimed at eradicating racism, together with a commensurate rise in the number of high-profile lawsuits against multinational firms, have stoked interest in the topic of global diversity. While many international and multinational businesses now have declarations, plans, and policies on global diversity management at a national level, their

diversity practices tend not to conform with global policies promoted by organizations (Nishii & Özbilgin, 2007). However, the craze for a word is always related to matters that a civilization asks itself at some point in its history. While ours is no exclusion to the rule, we have to consider from the outset that the problem of diversity is not in itself new, and neither is the interest of the management of universe in it. In fact, from an ethnographic point of view, diversity refers to two fundamental problems that every social group encounters.

1. In Pakistan, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) face the challenge of diversity.

This matter of collaboration among the diverse social parts of an organization is highlighted since organization exists as a set of principles. The issue of how individuals work together to achieve a shared objective, depending on their age, sex, socioeconomic origins, ethnicity, culture, education, and vocation, was raised. Both concepts, refer to a single person, and contextual, refers to cultural norms (Moore, 1999). Therefore, the question of sociality also serves as the foundation of allows businesses to manage. (Dameron, 2004). There are important reasons for implying diversity in organization. First, diversity signifies many objectives within countries since history provides meaning to diversity and integration. For instance, in the case of Pakistani organizations, the expatriate history, and therefore multiculturalism, has been the main justification for diversity (Tatli, Vassilopoulou, Ariss, & Özbilgin, 2012). Second, due to major social movements and historic contexts that lend significance to diversity categories and inclusion, very different goals, practices, and regulatory regimes in each nation have been created (Vassilopoulou, April, Da Rocha, Kyriakidou, & Ozbilgin, M.2016).

Third, Legislation regulating diversity and inclusion among organizations is national rather than a global or multination organization, so in the nonexistence of international legislation in this field, the cross-border, reliable guideline of global diversity and inclusion organizations remains an ideal distance (Kyriakidou, Kyriacou, Özbilgin, & Dedoulis, 2016). The existing regulations of global organizations remain domestically confined, with the global value chain continuing to suffer from unequal variety and integration of applications across nations, if this pattern stays unchecked. Without international legislation and coercive regulatory measures, few things can contribute to the implementation of the global approach to the value chain of diversity management and inclusion inside global businesses (Vassilopoulou et al., 2016). Organizations to address equality, diversity, and inclusion concerns beyond national lines, creative and progressive leadership is necessary. Further, voluntary actions taken by individual organizations as well as collectives such as those below the auspices of the United Nations might support such activities. (Soundararajan & Brown, 2016). In addition, in motivating companies to explore appropriate ways to their diversity and inclusion through their value chain Customer and consumer pressure groups are a major factor. (Smith NC, 2014). Thus, sustainability in many organizations, because of unequal practices and exploitation across the value chain, might get input from the global value chains and affect the lifespan of a company and degrade its corporate identity. Conclusion for the previous discussion, the benefit of diversity and inclusion in companies not only nationally but throughout the global context has a substantial competitive advantage (Ndungu, 2017).

Workforce Diversity

In an organization, diversity climate refers to how employees perceive their roles and whether they are treated fairly and given due weight in making important decisions, despite their differences (Choi, 2013; Jiang et al., 2022). Organizations must be fair and unbiased, and leaders must treat everyone equally (Choi, 2013; Opstrup & Villadsen, 2015). So that, some factors influence diversity include racial identity, gender, age, physical attributes, and colour. Age, national origin, religion, handicap, sexual orientation, values, ethnic culture, education, language, lifestyle, beliefs, physical development, and economic condition may all be incorporated into a broader concept of diversity (Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 2000).

Diversity refers to a sort of workforce policy that allows each employee to pursue their professional goals without interference from variables such as gender, race, nationality, religion, or other non-performance-related factors. (Bryan, 1999). Managing diversity terms of increasing the levels of a diverse workforce to perform at the highest level of their abilities in an appropriate work environment where no one group benefits or loses (Torres & Bruxelles , 1992).

Kyalo (2015) Age, gender, ethnicity, and educational background components of workforce diversity positively and significantly influence employee performance, according to a study done in the banking business in Kenya. Kowo and Akimbola (2018) investigate the impact of workforce diversity on employee performance in the Stallion Group of Companies, and it was discovered that gender, age, ethnicity, and educational background are all positively connected with employee performance. Amir et al. (2019) studied that age, gender, and educational background have a satisfactory effect on employee performance, according to research done on employees working in the higher education sector in Swabi District, KP Pakistan. Khan and Jabeen (2019) examined the impacts of workforce diversity on organizational social conscience behavior with the mediating role of inclusion. A diverse workforce is comprised of various of individuals from different sociocultural backgrounds. Diversity includes elements like race, gender, age, colour, physical prowess, ethnicity, etc. (Kundu and Turan, 1999).

Gender Diversity

Gender diversity is important for organizations because the world is a global village (Cho, 2022). Gender diversity has been linked to improved organizational performance (Catalyst, 2004). According to Gupta (2013), the competitive advantage of having a significant level of gender diversity increases, while the performance of organizations is negatively impacted by having a considerable level of gender diversity. According to Powell's (2011) research, a person's gender may be deduced biologically. Studying how individuals view men and women differently is a key component of gender diversity study. Gender differences, biases, and discrimination all reflect gender disparities and have an impact on how individuals respond to others' behavior in the job or any other group alliance. Workforce diversity will be advantageous if gender issues are acknowledged, spoken about, and resolved (Ullah, 2020).

Age Diversity

The development of an aging workforce has led to more interest in understanding how intergenerational connections affect an organization's performance (Pekka Imakunnas & Seija Imakunnas, 2010). Many organizations have included rising-age diversity. Several studies (for example, Barrington & Troske, 2001; Algahtani, 2013) have found that older employees are just as busy, lucrative, and skilled as younger ones. A diversified age group of employees would be more inventive, diverse, and beneficial than a homogenous age group (Williams & O'Reilly III, 1998).

Educational Diversity

Educational background bestows abilities that are necessary or helpful in one's employment, like tenure, and has a link to organizational success. Education may also help to ingrain in a profession a common language, a shared set of moral principles, and a shared worldview (Ely, 2004; Horwitz, & Horwitz, 2007). According to Choi and Rainey (2010), a greater output is driven by a larger proportion of skilled personnel. Emiko and Eunmi (2009) also believed that a person's efficiency would vary based on their degree of schooling. As a result, educational background is important for employees.

Ethnicity Diversity

Zgourides, John, and Watson's (2002), discovered that ethnic diversity enhances problem-solving from a range of racial and ethnic viewpoints, which contributed to higher team performance. Ethnically diverse communities produce greater innovation and growth because of the learning possibilities available to them (Garen, 2003). If ethnic diversity is respected and effectively handled, it could be positive, and vice versa. A diverse workforce may lead to enhanced creativity and innovation in small medium-sized enterprises, which increases performance (Van Knippenberg, Van Ginkel & Homan, 2013).

Employee Performance

Any organization considers its employees as its human capital, and employee satisfaction is a key factor for enhancing the growth and performance of the entity (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021). The evaluation of productivity in terms of input is employee performance. A variety of organizational characteristics, including Organisational Culture and Environment, Job satisfaction, job security, salary, and incentives (Saeed & Asghar, 2012). According to Irun Shahzadi, A. J. (2014) employee performance is determined by what a worker does and does not do. It compares input against the output's number as well as quality. Better employee performance, according to Dr. Trent Kaufman, D. J. (2015), can influence coworkers and spur SMEs to grow. According to Hashim, Ullah, and Khan (2017), employee output is "the successful fulfillment of one's commitments to create sound results." It refers to an employee's capacity to satisfy the requirements of the work. The cornerstone for successful employee performance is generally a strong and healthy workforce in a firm. Think about productivity, efficiency, work quality, and performance assessment (Kyalo & Gachunga, 2015).

According to the Adler, (1986), developing effective workforce diversity methods is crucial to enhancing employee performance and enhancing organizational effectiveness. An organization's success has a favorable influence on each employee's performance. The valuable advantages of employee diversity at the workforce concentration will also serve as both internal and external motivators for them and help them develop employee collaboration. This research viewpoint study put out the hypothesis that workers had become more adept at coping with workforce diversity as a result of experience. Workforce diversity will improve employee performance in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, and educational level.

Resource Base Theory and Workforce Diversity

According to resource-based perceptives, organizations that are able to manage important resources—i.e., resources that are valued and difficult to replicate might be able to sustain a competitive advantage (Barney, 1991).

The diverse contributions of many groups provide the groundwork for SME success. To overcome the difficulties of competing in a global market, worker diversity is a significant resource. The framework for interpreting strategic management that has the most influence is possibly the resource-based view of the organization for workforce diversity and employee performance. In this study, the real problems in workforce diversity contribute to impact of this study. The resource-based view may be successfully used in several other study fields as well.

As a result, these resources provide the basis for the reasonable expectations of revenues that compose a small medium-sized enterprise in competitive advantage, and, to the extent that imitating them is challenging, they signify a sustainable advantage over the long term. Each SME has a unique resource of employment because of previous employee performance and subsequent experience, and as a result, each SME has a unique opportunity set.

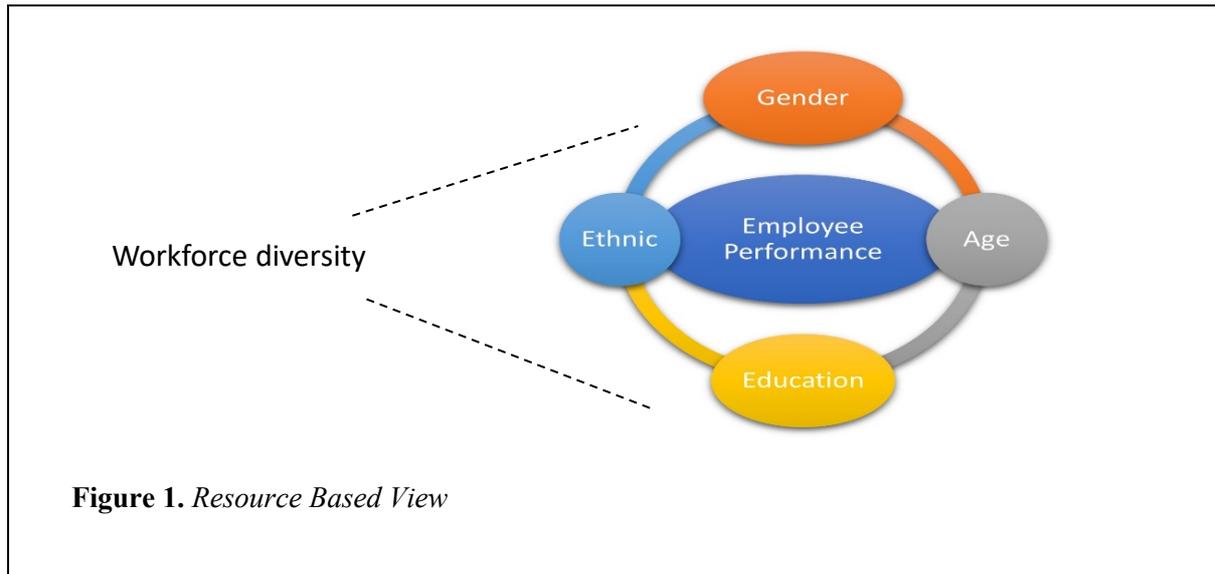


Figure 1. *Resource Based View*

STUDY OBJECTIVE

The objectives of the study are quite clear this research purpose is to identify the existing training and development trend and programs at diversity in small and medium-sized enterprises in Pakistan. This paper also assesses the relationship between training and development. This paper also highlights the impact of age, gender, education, and ethnicity on small and medium-sized enterprises in Pakistan such as performance and responsible employees' capability.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Self-administered paper-based questionnaires and online survey forms were used to collect data and convenient sampling technique was used for sample selection. In Pakistan total of SMEs are more than 5 million (SMEDA, 2022), from all of them only 40 SMEs were chosen based on the samples (Morgan 2012) due to the limitation of the study. A total of 220 questionnaires were distributed among the management in small and medium-sized enterprises; out of these about 170 questionnaires were filled by the management of SMEs. After deleting the unqualified responses, 120 were found to be complete and useful for further analysis.

The questionnaire comprised 9 sections: section one contained one question about the perception of business/social case for workforce diversity about employee performance for SMEs; section two contained two questions related to the leadership committee for SMEs policy; section three contained ten questions for diversity and assessment for SMEs; section four contained three questions about SMEs infrastructure creation; section five contained one question about system changes at SMEs; section six contained 3 questions for training for diversity at SMEs; section seven contained seven questions about performance evaluation for diversity at SMEs; section eight contained one question for evaluation and integration at SMEs; and section nine contained question related to the demographic of management of SMEs. There were 28 items adapted from the studies of Naff and Kellough (2003), Choi (2009). A demonstrative questionnaire was reviewed by experts of practitioners of SMEs management, and after suggested modifications, it was distributed among the management of SMEs. For the stability of outcomes, reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha was done; the results ($\alpha=0.79$) for 28 items indicated a high degree of consistency and reliability (Hair et al., 2009).

Sample

Survey responses received from small and medium enterprises. The scientific justification differs from nation to nation in the Asia-Pacific area but is often founded on assets, employment, or a sequence of the deuce. Small and medium-sized businesses in the industrial and service sectors are referred to differently in other nations (Kotelnikov, 2007). Small and medium-sized enterprises are well-defined in various ways some authors have given valuable definitions of small and medium-sized enterprises. Small and medium-sized enterprises are those that employ less than 100 people, according to Fong (1971). SMEs generally revolve around the owner/entrepreneur (Nooteboom, 1994). Similar to the argument made by Verhees & Meulenber (2004), a small business is one that is run and controlled by the owner directly.

Through the adapted survey by this study and defining details about factors affecting Pakistani SMEs, data about the demographics of SMEs, the organizational culture, approach to influence of diversity, and standards for compiling data an online survey questionnaire was used. To ensure supervising the respondents to emphasize on influence diversity in SMEs, the invite email containing the survey link and the introduction page of the survey consist of the description of influence of diversity on SMEs.

Participants

For data collection survey to identify organizations as small and medium enterprise having at least 100 employees (Fong, 1971). An online survey link was sent to management in small and medium enterprises. Through the period from May to Sept 2021, 170 completely or partially completed questionnaires were received. After eliminating questionnaires with more than 14.16% of responses missing. Responses from 40 companies were included in the analysis. The response rate was over 15%. There were no statistically significant differences between early and late responders in terms of the research constructs.

SURVEY OF RESPONDENTS: DEMOGRAPHICS

As a result of this survey shows that most of the middle age group of employees are more responsible while there are some respondents from higher age. As for the age group, the highest number of respondents were from the category of 31-50 years old representing 58.3% of the total respondents. The second-highest number of respondents were from the 20-30 age group (23.9%), followed by the 51-60 age group (9%).

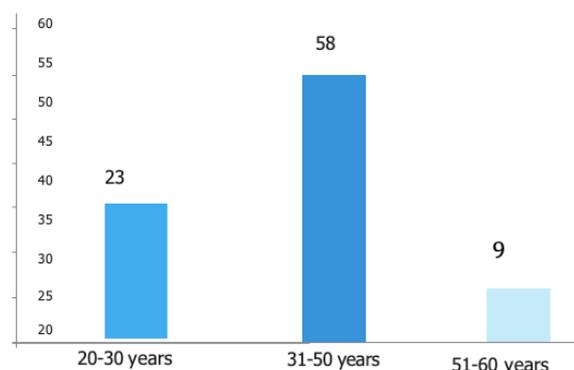
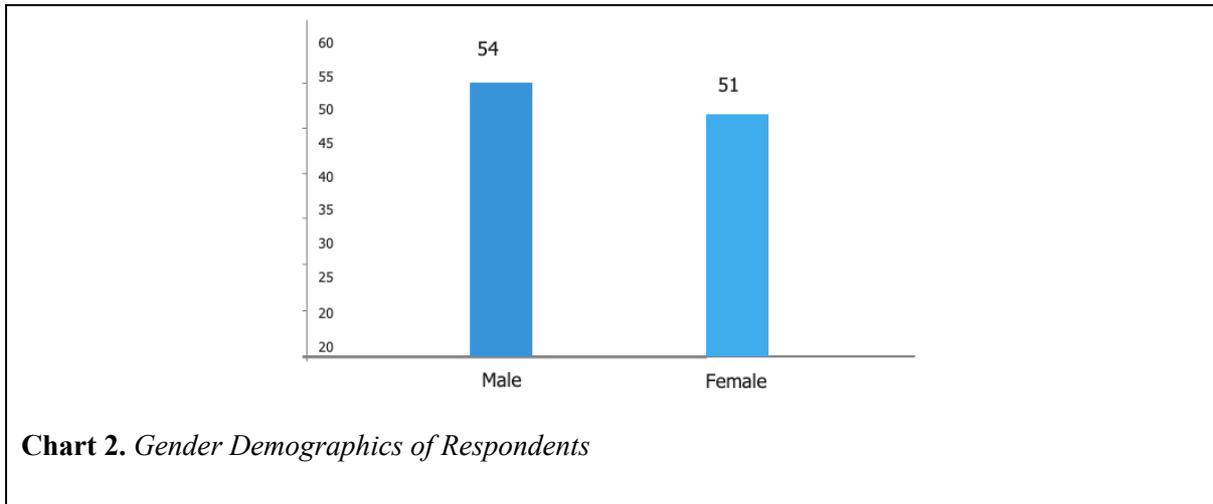
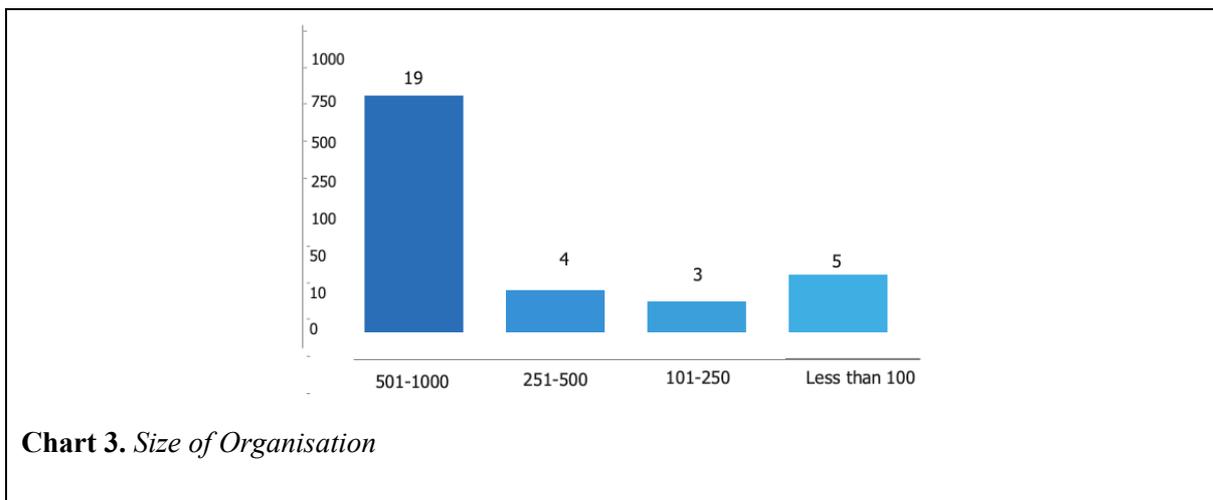


Chart 1. *Age Demographics of Respondents*

Overall, 54 participants were males, and 51 participants were females. The age of participants ranged from 21 to 60 years.



The survey was evenly distributed among the employee, males made up 24 percent of all responders while females made up the remaining 48 percent. As can be observed, both genders play equally important roles in the company, as the number of males and females in the organizations is not significantly different.



This article considers employee performance a dependent variable, and workforce diversity in terms of gender, age, education, and ethnicity as an independent variable.

Results

The first part of the survey measures the importance of influence diversity in Pakistani small and medium-sized enterprises. 40 responders says that influence of diversity is important for SMEs. 34 responders say influence of diversity is important for ethical reasons. 13 responders say regulatory/compliance reason. 3 responders says that it is not important. Results are incorporated in chart 4. This research dimensions have been discussed for this study to define the influence of diversity on employee performance in small and medium enterprises in Pakistan, based on above discussion.

INFLUENCE OF DIVERSITY: TOP 4 DIMENSIONS

Gender Diversity

22 survey responses received that gender diversity has significant relation for Pakistan's small and medium enterprises, it is a balanced or equitable representation of small and medium enterprises in Pakistan for different genders. Gender differences have existed throughout history and across cultures. Categories and biases that characterize positive traits and thus an above average for men (Kochan, Bezrukova, Ely, Jackson, Joshi, Jehn, & Thomas, 2003) continue and explain gender differences in an organization.

Age Diversity

For age diversity, 20 survey responses were received, which is significant relation for Pakistan's small and medium enterprises. Individuals of various ages may be recognized by a company in SMEs. The organization's management for the age population in all imaginable ways has become a recurring theme. Many organizations have adopted a diverse young workforce. Several research has found that middle-aged employees are just as active, valuable, and skilled as younger workers. A diverse age group of employees is thus more creative, diverse, and beneficial than a similar age group (Williams & O'Reilly III, 1998).

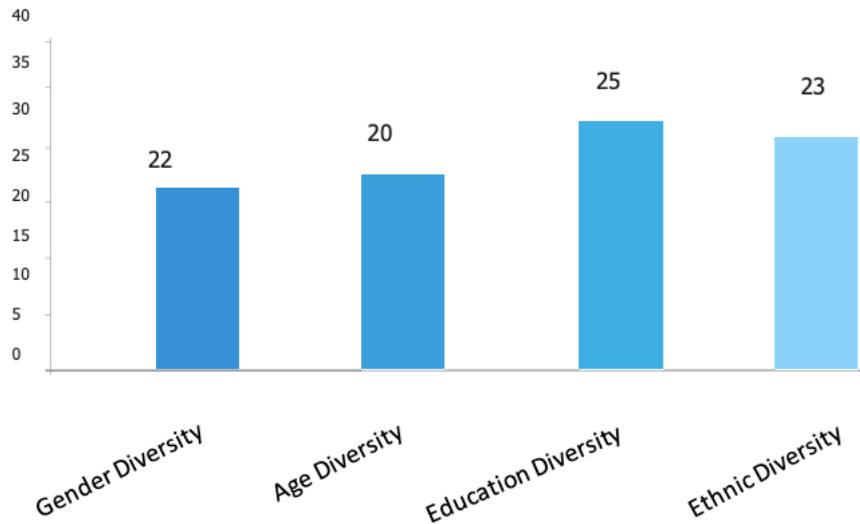
Education Diversity

25 survey response says that education diversity has significant relation for Pakistan's small and medium enterprises. Employees have different backgrounds of qualifications for education. Education diversity also influences employee performance. Choi and Rainey (2010) documented that a better productivity is driven by a more obvious section of skilled employees. Therefore, for staff, educational experience is important.

Ethnic Diversity

For ethnic diversity, 23 survey says that education diversity has significant relation for Pakistan's small and medium enterprises including individuals from distinct ethnic groups. According to the findings of this study, ethnic diversity develops problem-resolving by delivering ethnically different problem-resolving perspectives, which contributed to greater team achievement when the teams learned how to leverage these disparities.

Increasing multicultural demands in society are known to be a factor in the expansion of diverse small- and medium-sized enterprises, which include organizations devoted to family, religion, and education. (Zgourides, John, and Watson 2002).



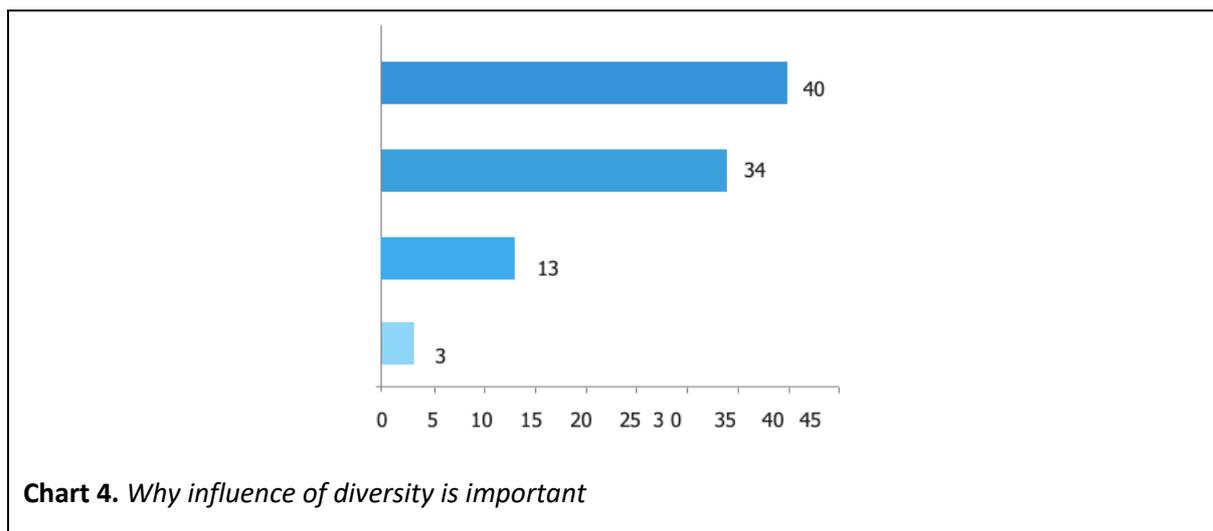
WHY DIVERSITY IMPORTANT FOR ORGANISATIONS

Influence of diversity is important due to business reasons (better governance, customer responsiveness, client base, income growth, wider perspectives, new ideas, innovation, problem-solving, larger talent pool, employer of the choice, brand recognition).

The influence of diversity is important due to ethical reasons (It is our social responsibility to provide inclusive, equitable and non-discriminatory access to resources to underrepresented segments of society for their main streaming and growth).

The influence of diversity is important due to regulatory compliance reason.

The influence of diversity is not important for my organization.



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study, age, gender, education, and ethnicity diversity at SMEs in Pakistan are examined as a means of contributing to the literature regarding the most important factors influencing employee performance and growth of SMEs. An age-diverse influence encourages an environment in which each group provides an exceptional set of skills necessary for problem-solving and accomplishing objectives. Employee age groupings at SMEs in Pakistan were diverse, and the organization reaped the advantages via enhanced performance. Gender equality results in a stable gender mix of personnel with a wide range of knowledge and talents, and such diverse teams produce better performance, which improves performance in diverse work environments. Skilled employees in SMEs perform particular tasks more simply and professionally compared to unskilled or less educated. However, education level had a limited link with performance in this study, because a lot of employees described work in departments/jobs that do not need the abilities learned in higher education institutions. Therefore, their degree of education may not have played a significant role on worker performance. Employee marital status did not appear to have a direct impact on performance. Ethnicities bring social and environmental change in organizations. Positive culture from different groups with different interests, skills, talents, and needs create good work culture in SMEs in Pakistan. Most of Pakistan's small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) have the potential to grow and develop in both national and international markets thanks to their diverse workforce.

Workforce diversity concerns all employees, everyone is unique in his or her individual attributes and, as such, is exemplified by uniqueness and difference in other people's eyes. Thus, diversity runs around most of every organization, and discrimination is likely to occur in every occupation, department, and level of corporate structure. According to this, diversity is a challenge that every department faces at some period throughout operation. For example, sales and marketing teams must be able to comprehend and interact with their extremely diversified client. As a result, all corporate departments, not just HR, should increase diversity awareness and successfully execute diversity management. A comprehensive strategy incorporating all organisational stakeholders is necessary for diversity management.

Limitation

The study is not free from limitations. First, this study discovers the effect of diversity on age, gender, education, and ethnicity, which are some of several measures representing a small and medium-sized enterprises in Pakistan. To make a strong investigation on diversity, some scholars propose the use of other measures, such as communication, culture, leadership diversity.

Practical implications

The small and medium-sized enterprises in Pakistan make efforts on establishing knowledge understanding to conduct training affecting on influence of diversity because most workers did not believe the organization had spent enough in informing employees. SMEs in Pakistan must concentrate on assigning responsibilities to employees taking related skills and training to improve performance. The employees stated that they were not allocated responsibilities for which they had been trained both at work and in company. Thus, performance at small and medium-sized enterprises in Pakistan would be improved if they will be applying their skills and expertise. Small and medium-sized enterprises in Pakistan should manage team-building activities to ensure that the employee who is hesitant about the outcome of gender, age, education, and ethnic diversity on need of attachment to engage with employees of different gender, age, education, and ethnic groups both are equally at a professional and a social level.

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