

**BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF WORKFORCE DIVERSITY IN  
MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES IN TANZANIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

Workforce diversity plays an important role in the success of many organizations in the world. This paper Identifies the benefits and challenges of workforce diversity in manufacturing industries in Tanzania. The study adopted a survey research design and used a simple random sampling technique to select a sample size of 43 respondents who were directors, managers and normal employees from selected manufacturing industries in Tanzania. Data was collected using questionnaires, analyzed using descriptive statistics(frequency and percentage) and the results presented using a bar chart and a table. The findings of the study show that workforce diversity has numerous advantages in manufacturing industries in Tanzania. However, despite the numerous advantages, the findings further indicate that the effectiveness of workforce diversity in manufacturing industries in Tanzania is cropped up with several disadvantages. Furthermore, the findings reveal a lack of workforce diversity policies and procedures in manufacturing industries. Based on the findings, the study recommends the need for effective workforce diversity policies and procedures in manufacturing industries that will lead to effective management of workforce diversity.

**Keywords:** Benefits, Challenges, Workforce diversity, Manufacturing industries and Tanzania.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Organizations are comprised of people from different nationalities, cultural beliefs, religion and political backgrounds, these people differ in many things such as characteristics, values, beliefs, education, ethnicity, race, age, sexual, personality, cognitive, ability and others. In the past twenty years, the growing diverse workforce in organizations has led scholars to pay increased attention to the issue of workforce diversity (Gupta, 2013). This act of bringing together the variety of people from different backgrounds has been a day to day practice in many organizations because it has tangible benefits in the success of the organizations today. Today, the quality of an organization's workforce is an important determinant of its ability to compete and win in a world marketplace (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). Organizations with effective workforce diversity programs are found to be more successful than those organizations lacking effective policies (Gathers, 2003) and business that desires success, competitiveness and sustainability must incorporate diversity initiatives into their day-to-day business practices (Childs, 2005). Given the widespread impact of globalization and internationalization, workplace

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diversity in all forms of organizations, including higher education, is now a fact of life and a trend that will continue for a long time (Okoro and Washington, 2012). Managing workforce diversity is more than acknowledging differences in people and includes recognizing the value of differences, combating discrimination and promoting inclusiveness (Ogunjimi, 2015), is about ensuring that all people maximize their potential and their contribution to the organization (Armstrong, 2006) because organizational success and competitiveness depends on the ability to manage diversity effectively in the workplace (Kerby& Burns, 2012) and the changes in our world indicate that a diverse workforce is beneficial to any organization (Gomez-Mejia, Balkin, Cardy, 2007).

### **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Workforce diversity is one of the ongoing discussions today in many organizations including manufacturing industries in Tanzania. After three decades of talking about diversity in the workplace, there is still considerable debate and confusion over what actually constitutes workforce diversity (Simons & Rowland, 2011), and with this continuous and unending debate and confusion it is important to conduct a study on the benefits of workforce diversity in the organization.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 The concept of workforce diversity**

Daft, Kendrick & Natalia (2010) were of the view that today organizations are embracing a more inclusive definition of diversity that recognizes a spectrum of differences that influence how employees approach work, interact with each other or derive satisfaction from work. Carrell, Mann, and Seigler (2006) averred that modern definitions of workforce diversity focus on the ways that people differ that can affect a task or relationship within an organization. Gomez-Mejia et al (2007) defined diversity as human characteristics that make people different from one another. Robbins (2009) explained that workforce diversity is referred as the human capital of an organization that is more heterogeneous with all humans from different sex, race, old, young, education, culture, regions. Wentling and Palmarivas (2000) maintained that broader definition of diversity may include age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, values, ethnic culture, education, language, lifestyle, beliefs, physical appearance, and economic status. Dessler (2011) saw diversity as the variety or multiplicity of demographic features that characterize a company's workforce, particularly in terms of race, sex, culture, national origin, handicap, age, and religion. Bosworth (2014) contended that workplace diversity is a desirable goal supported by federal and state laws that forbid discrimination in all areas of employment. Jayne and Dipboye (2004) advocated that diversity has evolved from a focus on legally protected attributes such as race, gender, and age to a much broader definition that includes the entire spectrum of human differences. Otiye, Messah, and Mwaleka (2010 ) claimed that diversity refers to a mosaic of people who bring a variety of backgrounds, perspectives, values, and benefits as assets to the groups and organizations with which they interact. Mulkeen (2008) inferred that workplace diversity as all the differences that exist within people with respect to age, gender, sexual orientation, education, cultural background, religion, and work experience. Griffin and Moorhead (2014) identified two dimensions of diversity which are primary and

secondary dimensions. Primary dimensions of diversity refer to those factors that are either inborn or exert extraordinary influence on early socialization which include age, race, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental abilities, and sexual orientation while secondary dimensions of diversity refer to factors that help to define individuals and which may be less permanent than primary dimensions but can be adapted or changed, these include dimensions such as educational background, geographical location, income, marital status, military experience, parental status, religious beliefs, and work experience. Skarzynski and Gibson (2008) argued that compliance with government legislation and political correctness are only two of the forces driving diversity. Tatli and Ozbilgin (2009) identified three approaches/models towards corporate diversity management which are liberal change, radical change, and transformational change.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The study was a survey research design and used simple random sampling technique to select a sample size of 43 respondents who were directors, managers and normal employees from the target population of the study. The data was collected using questionnaires and analysed using descriptive statistics.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

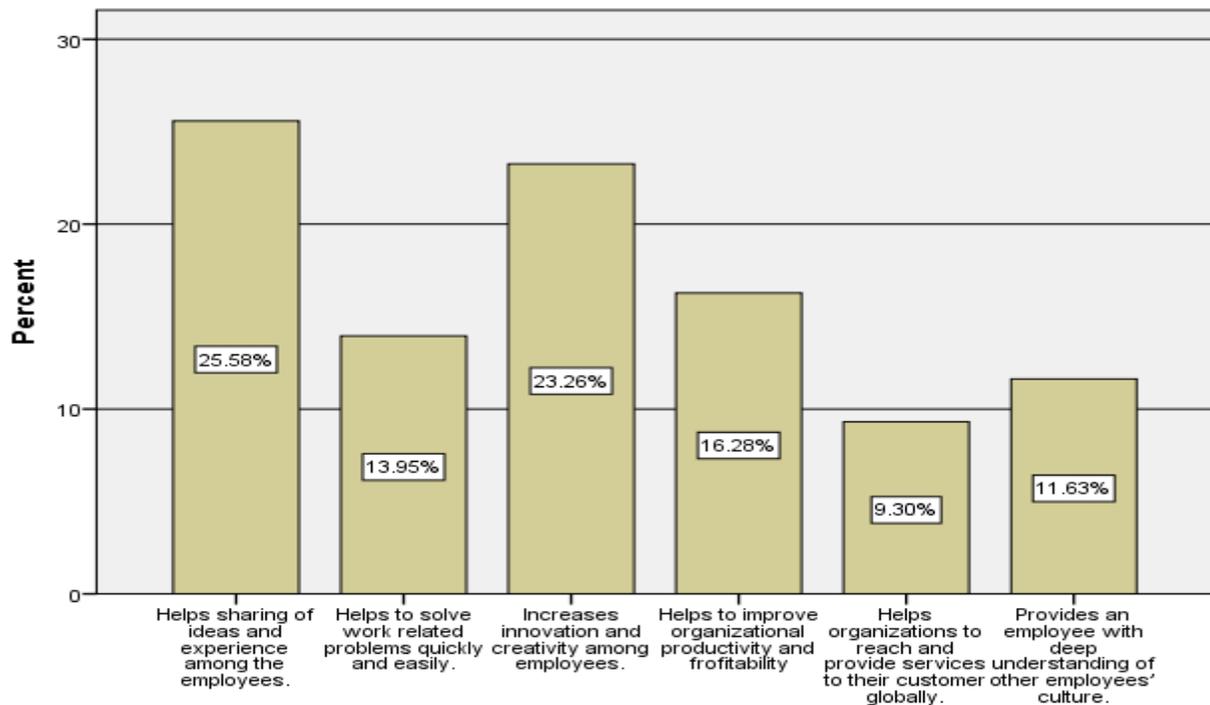


Figure 4.1 Benefits of workforce diversity in the manufacturing industries in Tanzania

The study sought to know the benefits enjoyed by manufacturing industries in Tanzania from their diversified workforce. The results in figure 4.1 reveal that 25.58% of the total respondents

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highlighted that workforce diversity helps employees to share ideas and experience among themselves, 13.95% inferred that workforce diversity helps employees and the management to solve work-related problems quickly and easily, 23.26% narrated that workforce diversity helps to increase innovation and creativity among employees. relatively, 16.28% said that workforce diversity helps to improve organizational productivity and profitability, 9.30% elaborated that workforce diversity helps the organizations to reach and provide services to their customers globally and 11.63% contended that workforce diversity provides an employee with a deep understanding of other employees' culture.

The study results are in line with the study by Griffin and Moorhead (2014) who explained that effective workforce diversity programs can provide a number of benefits, such as providing a larger pool of ideas and experiences, fostering better morale, promoting heightened creativity and innovation, improving decision making, communicating varying points of view, supply a greater variety of solutions to problems in service, sourcing, allocation of resources and accomplishing social justice. Konrad (2003) stated that a global economy requires organizations to attract and retain a diverse workforce so that they can effectively deal with an increasingly diverse customer base leading to increased market share. Berman et al. (2016) argued that workforce diversity is an ethical and managerial necessity that promote an environment that fosters creativity and innovation. Rice (2004) pointed out that workforce diversity provides a company with greater knowledge of the preferences and consuming habits of a diversified market. Greenberg (2004) averred that workforce diversity supports a broader range of services. Kreitz (2008) postulated that workforce diversity provides more efficient service to customers on a global basis and permit employees with talents to feel needed and have a sense of belonging, which in turn increases their commitment to the company and allows each of them to contribute in a unique way. Heneman et al (2015) described that workforce diversity meets business strategy needs and the needs of customers more effectively also bring together individual talents and experiences to suggest ideas that are flexible and will adapt to fluctuating markets and customer demands. McInnes (1999) concurred that provide a distinct competitive advantage over an organization that lacks diversity.

Consequently, Tencer (2011) acknowledged that workforce diversity promotes a competitive edge and support effective problem-solving on the job. Galer (2014) advocated that workforce diversity facilitate understanding of other customs, cultures, and marketplace needs. Tatli and Ozbilgin (2009) commented that a diverse and inclusive workforce is critical for organizations that want to attract and retain top talent. Baset-jones, (2005) observed that diversity is a recognizable source of creativity and innovation that can provide a basis for competitive advantage. Sohail, et al (2011) maintained that diversity has positive effects on innovation. Cox, Lobel and McLeod (1991) contended that workforce diversity is tied up to several other performance indicators in organizations including sustainability and productivity. Barta, Kleiner, and Neumann (2012) also reported a direct correlation between a diverse workforce and productivity. Ilmakunnas and Ilmakunnas (2011) argued that individual creativity and frequency of communication of a diverse workforce contribute to productivity.

Furthermore, Black and Enterprise (2001) stated that valuing diversity is a key component of effective people management, which can improve workplace productivity. Choy (2007) narrated that the study of diversity and performance is important because diversity is correlated with synergistic performance. Gomez-Mejia, et al. (2007) supported that employee diversity can be a

major contributing factor within organizations for stimulating creativity, problem-solving and flexibility, which in turn directly contributes to innovative approaches of the organization. Pinto and Pinto (2011) noted that diversity in the workforce directly contributes to and affects creativity. Afzal, Mahmood and Sajid (2013) recommended that if firms use their diverse human resource in the right way, then it will be very profitable for them because human diversity increases the flow of new, creative and innovative ideas. Richard, Barnet, Dwyer and Chandwick (2007) argued diversity is more conducive to performance in the service industry where firm members come into contact with customers who prefer to be served and interact with similar others, than in manufacturing industry. Jehn, Northcraft and Neale (1999) commented that workforce diversity is associated with problem-solving and creative thinking. Kelli and Mayra (2002) agreed that workforce diversity improves individual and organizational performance.

**Table 4.1 Challenges facing workforce diversity in manufacturing industries in Tanzania**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Communication among employees sometimes is a problem due to cultural differences.	10	23.3	23.3
Resistance to changes by some employees who have their own way of doing things.	8	18.6	41.9
Bureaucracy on how to carry out instructions which cause delay and consumes alot of time.	6	14.0	55.8
Existence of conflicts caused by discrimination in working style, cultural background and tribal groups which results in disunity among employees.	5	11.6	67.4
Working styles and social integration is influenced sometimes by small groups who value themselves as superior to others.	5	11.6	79.1
Integration across multicultural systems sometimes is difficult because everyone values his own culture.	9	20.9	100.0
Total	43	100.0	

The study wanted to know the challenges facing workforce diversity in manufacturing industries in Tanzania. The results in table 4.1 show that 23.3% of the total respondents said that communication among employees due to cultural differences is a challenge facing workforce diversity in manufacturing industries, 18.6% saw resistance to changes by some employees who have their own way of doing things as a challenge, 14% mentioned bureaucracy on how to carry out instructions which cause delay and consumes a lot of time as a challenge, 11.6% pointed out that conflicts caused by discrimination in working styles, cultural backgrounds and tribal groups which results in disunity among employees is a challenge, again 11.6% contended that the influence of working styles and social integration by small groups who values themselves as superiors than others is a challenge while 20.9% disclosed that difficult in integration across multicultural systems is a challenge facing workforce diversity in manufacturing industries in Tanzania because everyone values his/her own culture.

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According to Williams and O' Reilly (1998), workplace diversity can be either beneficial or dangerous for the performance of an organization. Heneman et al. (2015) supported that although there are advantages to workforce diversity efforts, there are also additional costs associated with recruiting, selection, and training programs that must be considered. Greenberg (2004) concurred that three major challenges affecting effective workforce diversity in the organization are communication challenges which include perceptual, cultural and language barriers, resistance to change which refers to employees' refusal to accept the fact that the social and cultural makeup of their workplace is changing and challenges related to implementation of diversity in workplace policies. Moreover, Schneider & Northcraft (1999) elaborated that three social problems faced by organizations that want to attain and maintain workforce diversity are the dilemma of organizational, managerial, and individual participation. Bateman and Snell (2007) inferred that five challenges of workforce diversity are unexamined assumptions which refers to the difficulty experienced by many people in seeing the world from a different point of view, lower cohesiveness which refers to lack of similarity in language, culture and experience, communication problems which refers to difficulties of misunderstandings, inaccuracies, inefficiencies, and slowness, mistrust and tension which refers to misunderstanding, mistrust and fear of those who are different and stereotyping which refers to inappropriately stereotyping different colleagues rather than accurately perceiving and evaluating those individuals' contributions, capabilities, aspirations, and motivations. Adler (1991) argued that diverse organizations may have difficulty converging meanings, may find it hard to reach a single agreement, and have difficulty agreeing on courses of action.

However, Heneman et al (2015) advised that regardless of the numerous challenges, organizations must carefully consider how to engage in active diversity planning and select the right mix of active and passive strategies to maximize organizational effectiveness. Rice (2014) also commented that whatever challenges diversity may create, its benefits outweigh the costs.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The need for workforce diversity in the organization especially in today's business environment is unavoidable but the management of workforce diversity is a big challenge in some organizations. Therefore the study recommends that organizations need to have effective policies and procedures in place that can help them to manage workforce diversity properly. when workforce diversity is not managed properly, there will be a potential for higher voluntary employees' turnover, difficulty in communication and destructive interpersonal conflicts (Elsaid, 2012).

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