

## ***KNOWLEDGE DIVERSITY AT THE WORKPLACE: AN OVERVIEW***

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### ***Abstract***

No workplace can successfully run in an isolation of single knowledge expertise and skill. Time and again, it has been found that individual learning has a solitary pinnacle and that gaining from better performing people is constantly beneficial in long run. To outperform other competitive organization, it is essential to consider, coordinate and collaborate with different people with diverse domains of knowledge expertise. Existence of knowledge diversity in the organization is prime most way to innovate and come up with creative solutions to the problems and to further expand business successfully by beating competition in the market. Knowledge diversity is not merely existence of people having diverse expertise and knowledge background but making the productive use of these expertises for the best benefit of the companies and organization. Managing knowledge diversity at the workplace is a tedious task to any manager. Major bottleneck that mostly has been faced by organizations in management of knowledge diversity is clashes and overlapping of ideas and solution provided by the different experts from different background. It is the responsibility of the management and top authorities at the workplace to maintain cohesive work environment and creating an environment of exposure and growth for the benefit of individuals and organization all together. This paper is a qualitative research entirely based on review of literature, aims to give insight, explanation and emphasis on concept of knowledge diversity. Also, this paper try to answer the questions about what knowledge diversity brings to the table and how does it benefit organizational and individual performance. It also highlights the major barriers that hinder existing knowledge diversity in the organization to give the best results and how management can overcome those barriers with help of existing employees and top management to fulfill both individual and organizational goals.

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**Keywords :** *Conflict, Diversity, Knowledge, Expertise, Performance*

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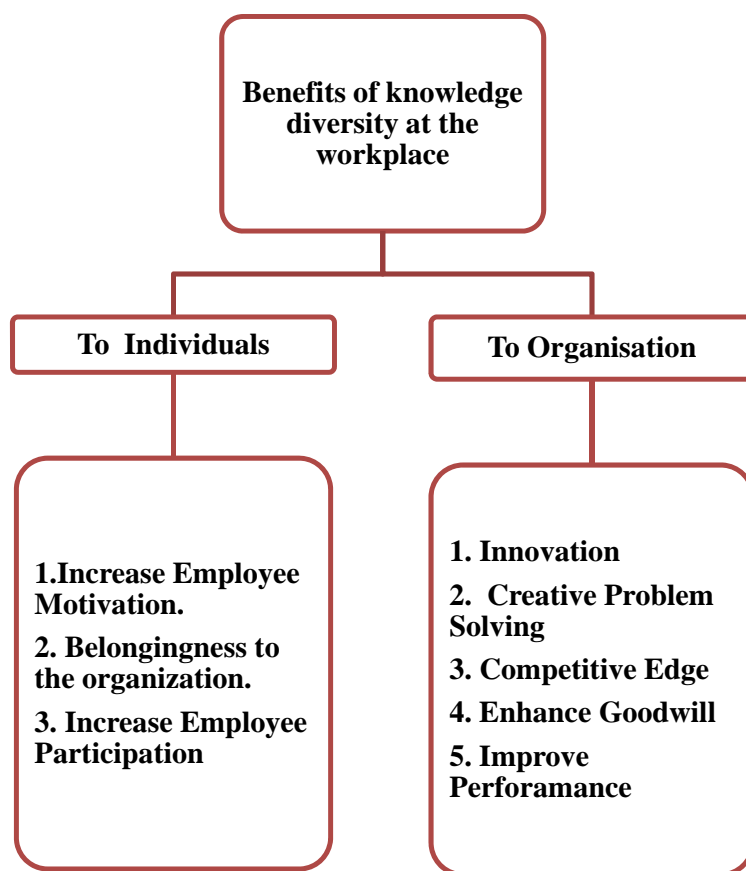
### **INTRODUCTION**

Business organizations at National and International level are keen to take initiative to promote innovation, to adapt to the extremely dynamic environment and to gain a competitive edge in this turbulent market. To cope up with such situation of rapidly changing environment, organizations are inclining towards knowledge diversity and have start embracing the diversity and all the benefits the that diverse knowledge, expertise in single organization brings to the table. According to few scientist **knowledge** is considered as one of the dimensions of workplace diversity but no in-depth study has been undertaken to explore knowledge diversity in totality. Knowledge diversity is having a set of people in the organization having diverse expertise, diverse educational background, diverse work experience, and diverse cognitive style. In other word knowledge diversity is an organization is a group of employees who bring different ideas, opinion, different solution to the same problem, and bring in diverse perspective to the organization taking into the account diverse possibilities. It is essential to have

knowledge diversity in an organization in this fast changing environment because one way have different interpretation to different people involved. One thing which is seemed as opportunity to one employee, may seemed as a challenge to other employee and vice-versa, which may lead to the conflicts, therefore, , it is essential to consider, coordinate and collaborate to gain competitive edge an take advantage to having a knowledge based diversity at the workplace.

**BENEFITS OF HAVING KNOWLEDGE DIVERSITY AT WORKPLACE**

No workplace can successfully run in an isolation of single knowledge expertise and skill. Time and again, it has been found that individual learning has a solitary pinnacle and that gaining from better performing people is constantly beneficial in long run. To outperform other competitive organization, it is essential to consider, coordinate and collaborate with different people having diversity in domains of knowledge expertise. Existence of knowledge diversity in the organization is prime most way to innovate and come up with creative solutions to the problems and to further expand business successfully by beating competition in the market. Benefits of having cognitive diversity:



*Fig.1. Benefits of having knowledge diversity at the workplace.*

*Source: Authors own contribution*

To Individual

- 1. Increase Employee Motivation:** When knowledge diversity is embraced in an organization and employees are given opportunities to include their own knowledge, skills, and expertise to solve a particular problem or in execution of the task, they feel motivated to perform better.

2. **Belongingness to the organization:** Fair and just consideration of the ideas and opinion to solve a work problem and task completion given by employee, makes employee feel accepted in the organization, which also align the individual and organizational goal and therefore employees have this feeling of belongingness.
3. **Increase Employee Participation:** Acknowledging and embracing the knowledge diversity in the organization and the feeling of fair and equal acceptance in work setting enhances the employee's motivation to work with full integrity, and to give genuine and quality solution to the problem solving and task completion, thereby, increasing the employee engagement and participation for the benefit of both oneself and organization.

#### To Organization

1. **Innovation & Creative Problem Solving:** Knowledge diversity is one great source of bringing in innovation in the organization. Synergy of varied knowledge, expertise and skill aid in innovation in product development, product marketing and ideas in business development. Similarly on encountering any problem pool of knowledge diversity can help in solving problem differently, more creatively, taking lesser time and cost.
2. **Competitive Edge:** Pool of knowledge diversity brings in innovation and creative problem solving which gives a competitive edge and a first mover advantage in that particular field.
3. **Enhance Knowledge base:** no Organizations own the expertise and technology of its own that is needed to effectively innovate in today's digital economy. Successful companies identify opportunities and execute against them by sharing knowledge, acquiring people from diverse expertise and tapping into expertise in-house and beyond helps in smarter performance, adjusting to new difficulties and avoiding missteps.
4. **Improve Performance:** A recent report by the Center for Talent Innovation, it was found that innovation and performance is profoundly corresponded with two components diversity: inherent diversity (the traits that you were brought into the world with and have been molded by, for example, sex, ethnicity and sexual introduction), and acquired diversity (the impact of your encounters and what you've gained from your conduct). In the same study it was found that individuals who work in traded on an open market organizations that stress two-dimensional diversity are 75% more likely to implement marketable idea; 70% more likely to capture new market; and 45% more likely to improve their organization market holding.

#### BARRIERS TO KNOWLEDGE DIVERSITY AT THE WORKPLACE

1. **Political Barriers:** According to Post, C. et al. (2004), the issue of diversity in the workforce is inherently a political issue, which arises because of conflict of interest i.e. whether there should be greater equity or equality and the main challenge for managing diversity in the workforce is to bridge this political difference.
2. **Conflict:** According to Kakar, A. K. (2017), Conflict occurs due to perceived differences or real differences are the source of conflict in team, which is mostly magnified by functional and demographic diversity. The author found that both high & low levels of relationship conflicts are barrier to knowledge sharing.
3. **Favoritism/ Biasedness:** No individual is immune to biasedness and favoritism the human mind makes its own assumptions and categorizes to learn and act spontaneously. On experiencing favoritism towards other employee and prejudice towards oneself while sharing knowledge, expertise and skill is a demotivating factor in the organization, which impacts the employees morally and hamper their engagement.

### WAYS TO OVERCOME BARRIERS TO KNOWLEDGE DIVERSITY

Managing knowledge diversity at the workplace is a tedious task to any manager. It is the responsibility of the management and top authorities at the workplace to maintain cohesive work environment and creating an environment of exposure and growth for the benefit of individuals and organization all together. On the basis of review of literature, major strategies for the managing knowledge diversity are:

1. Think beyond Cognitive and demographic biases.
2. Open to the out of box ideas.
3. Open to out-group member.
4. Capitalize on synergy.

### CONCLUSION:

Potential knowledge is associated with the ambiguity and complexity, however, the organization ability to acquire and exploit knowledge is based on organization inherent outlook and culture of accommodating knowledge diversity in the organization. Thus, knowledge diversity lays a foundation for internalization, because it improves the probability of relating new knowledge with existing knowledge and outperform in dynamic business environment.

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