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THE INFLUENCE OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP ON WORKPLACE DIVERSITY: ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AS MEDIATOR

Shafqat Ullah[1] & Irfan Ullah Khan[2]

[1]PhD Scholar, Department of Public Administration, Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan, Pakistan
[2]Assistant Professor, Department of Public Administration, Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan

KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Transformational Leadership, Workplace Diversity, Organizational Culture, Mediation & Higher Education	This study explores the impact of transformational leadership on workplace diversity over mediating role of organizational culture in higher education institutions context in the southern region, KP, Pakistan. The study aims to understand that how leadership impact creation of inclusive environments wherein diverse individuals feels as respected, valued and empowered for realizing institutional strategic objectives. In this connection, quantitative research design was employed, using a structured survey distributed among teachers as target population while utilizing the sample. In this connection, hypothesized relationships were extracted from theoretical framework that are chased through different statistical tools to confirm the existence of the relationships, extracting the required information and reaching the desired conclusion for making suitable decisions about research issues in general as well as in particular context like higher education institutions. Thus, study results provide the significant information for reaching the conclusion and making the decisions. The future research may explore the longitudinal effects and extend the study towards other sectors for comparative analysis in order to compare the diverse outcome and contribute the knowledge from different dimensions.
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INTRODUCTION

The higher education is an important domain that ensures the provision of quality education from different spheres to students to improve skills, knowledge and potential and make them equipped towards professional career (Mandefro, Semela & Bezabih, 2025). Similarly, the higher institutions provide diverse opportunities to workforces to nurture their abilities and competencies to improve their contributions for attaining strategic outcomes (Amtu, Souisa, Joseph & Lumamuly, 2021). In

this drive, this role in effectively performed by leadership over different traits and styles wherein transformational leadership has been considered as leading phenomenon (Nasir, Zakaria & Zien, 2022), that is responsible for ensure the diversity and inclusion and ensuring desired outcomes over strong culture and effective justice (Fife, Stephens, Lyons & Huang, 2021). The workplace diversity has appeared as critical priorities for institutions aiming to thrive in modern gradually socially and globalized aware environments (Bernstein, Bulger, Salipante & Weisinger, 2020). The diversity denotes to the representation of individuals with diverse characteristics, while inclusion denotes to creating working environment where diverse individuals feel respected, valued, and integrated into institutional fabric.

The transformational leaders are categorized by their ability to provide intellectual stimulation, articulate compelling vision, offer individualized consideration, and act as role models for followers (Boerner, Eisenbeiss & Griesser, 2007) The research indicates that leaders can enhance diversity and inclusion efforts by promoting the shared vision of fairness and equality, modeling inclusive behaviors, empowering employees and challenging systemic biases within institutional practices for success (Alexandra, Ehrhart & Randel, 2021). The transformational leadership is innovative, inspires the workers, and brings about positive change in institutions. In this case, these behaviors, in particular, affect attitude towards various initiatives and activities (Schaubroeck, Lam & Cha, 2007). The culture of institution integrates beliefs, values and assumptions that influence behavior at the workplace. The culture and justice affect the effectiveness of leadership in easing diversity and inclusion at workplace (Saima & Akhtar, 2015). The hierarchical, rigid and exclusionary cultures, on contrary, majority are outcomes of altruistic leadership programs. The leaders enhance culture by fostering cultural flexible and changing the attitude of obeying diversity to engaging in engaging in diversity.

The leadership bridges the social justice with organizational behavior as literature shown that the transformational leadership affects really institutional outcomes likewise engagement, creativity, satisfaction and commitment (Cheng & Chuan, 2011). The leadership seeks to motivate and inspire followers to exceed expectations by aligning team goals with higher standards (Athena & Maria, 2006). The workplace diversity refers to presence of changes amid employees based on diverse orientations, other identity markers. It boosts creativity, decision-making and global attractiveness, but only effectively managed (Barak, Lizano & Kim, 2016). The culture is an amalgamation of shared beliefs, values, and assumptions guiding executive behavior, shapes that how diversity and inclusion efforts are perceived and implemented (Masood, Dani, Burns & Backhouse, 2006). A transformational leader can set tone, but only receptive culture institutionalizes inclusive behavior, justice includes employee perceptions of the fairness in procedures, outcomes, and interpersonal interactions (Mahdinezhad, Suandi, Silong & Omar, 2013). Consequently, transformational leaders influence culture by shifting norms, reinforcing inclusive values, and setting behavioral hopes for the desired outcomes.

Problem Statement

Despite increasing awareness of value of diversity and inclusion in workplace, many institutions continue to face significant challenges in creating environments where employees feel respected,

empowered, and treated fairly. This contradiction raises critical questions about the underlying mechanisms that either inhibit or enable the success of transformational leadership in advancing diversity and inclusion goals. While transformational leadership is widely recognized as the key driver in promoting equitable practices and inclusive values, its actual impact on the workplace diversity and inclusion outcomes remains unreliable across the different organizational settings. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the extent to which the organizational culture mediate relationship between transformational leadership and workplace diversity in educational context in particular context. Thus, this study is expected to provide suitable information for contributing the existing knowledge.

Objectives & Hypotheses

1. There is significant association amid transformational leadership, organizational culture and workplace diversity in educational context (H_1).
2. There is significant impact of transformational leadership and organizational culture on the workplace diversity in educational context (H_2).
3. There is significant mediating role of culture in linking the transformational leadership, and workplace diversity in educational context (H_3).

LITERATURE REVIEW

In contemporary organizational landscape, workplace diversity has converted into strategic basics towards desired success, despite widespread investment and discourse in diversity and inclusion, many organizations struggle to take diversity policies into inclusive cultures where all employees feel empowered and valued (Davis, Frolova & Callahan, 2016). The diversity reflects demographic individualities while inclusion refers to the extent to which individuals from diverse backgrounds are respected, integrated, able to contribute meaningfully within organization (Goldberg, Kessler & Govern, 2019). The empirical research supports that transformational leader is more likely to embrace and promote the diversity-friendly behaviors (Tahir, Abdullah, Ali & Daud, 2014). This disconnect arises from gap between formal policies and actual behavior of leaders, the prevailing culture, and fairness of organizational systems in varied circumstances (Rokhman & Hassan, 2012). An environment that supports inclusiveness in organizations will assist in grounding the vision of the leaders to the practice, culture has been defined as culture resisting to change, as there are structural hierarchies deep-rooted in organizational culture where even a leader who is inclusive will be conflicting.

The organizational setting can be the key determinant that can define success of behaviors with regard to actual results of diversity and inclusion (Post, Muzio, Sarala, Wei & Faems, 2021). The organizational culture has been referred to as systems of beliefs and assumptions which determine perceptions and behavior of individuals of an organization. The organizational justice is interpreted as fairness in the working environment (Sehat, Dharma & Indra, 2024). The lack of justice because there is inequitable distribution of the work among others is injustice that destroys trust and leads to disengagement of the marginalized employees (Tahira, Sadia, Khan & Ali, 2022). In the higher education, diversity extends beyond gender, race, and ethnicity to include the language, socio-economic background, age, religion, disability, and academic discipline (Fife, Stephens, Lyons &

Huang, 2021). Their capability empowers employees to challenge current situation, and consider the unique needs of followers makes them effective in promoting inclusion and diversity within institutions for the desired outcomes (Rao & Tilt, 2016). The faculty report often experiences of the marginalization, and limited access to decision-making processes as well as unequal chances for the professional advancement.

Hitherto, despite increasing efforts to implement the diversity and inclusion policies, many higher institutions, continue to struggle with the contained bias, and exclusionary practices. In this drive, organizational culture acts as dais for leadership impact if basic culture is rigid, discriminatory as well as hierarchical (Barak, Lizano & Kim, 2016). The friendly culture based on teamwork, candor, and respect, is bound to persist encompassing the practices of inclusiveness even across organization (Saima & Akhtar, 2015). Moreover, with perception of increased justice, employees become more motivated to remain committed to organization objective (Zeb, Rehman, Arsalan & Khan, 2021), and have confidence in the leaders as well as advocating and encouraging diversity and inclusion programs in organization (Bernstein et al., 2020). Besides, interactional and institutional unfairness, i.e., organizational injustice is increasingly becoming interesting, has proved to have a significant impact particularly in the higher education (Cho & Dansereau, 2010) Conversely, inequity is a trigger of detachment, change rejection and turnover. This phenomenon is especially appropriate to the diverse ethnic structure and continuously evolving educational environment for the desired development and success.

The issues are even more acute in context of higher education because of lack of strong institutional policies concerning the diversity, the gap in the development of the leaders, or the socio-cultural liberalism (Goldberg Kessler & Govern, 2019). Academically, these issues should be addressed, but more to point inclusive constructive progressive educational settings should be offered, which can adequately address evolving needs of the society (Kamoche, Siebers, Mamman & Kahindi, 2015). In this regard, this research study seeks to fill a gap in the literature by investigating connection between transformational leadership, diversity and inclusion in higher education in the dimension of justice and culture (Schaubroeck, Lam & Cha, 2007). These constructs are interdependent and synergy between them can be used to make institutional performance as well as faculty work engagement and educational equity become the best leading consequences (Tahira, Sadia, Khan & Ali, 2022). The leadership is characterized by leader ability to inspire, individually support and intellectually stimulate followers (Buil, Martínz & Matute, 2019). Thus, the inclusion denotes to the extent to which the individuals feel respected, welcomed, supported, and thus able to participate in the institutional life.

In evolving landscape of higher education, primarily within multicultural, resource-constrained regions, interplay amid the transformational leadership, workplace inclusion, workplace diversity, organizational culture, as well as justice has become critically important (Koh, Lee & Joshi. 2019). The transformational leaders set attractiveness for diversity and inclusion by modeling inclusive behavior, addressing unconscious biases, and advocating for fair practices (Abasilim, Ugochukwu & David, 2014). In higher education, such leaders go beyond the administrative tasks and seek to challenge existing norms and practices, motivate faculty toward the shared vision, encourage the

innovation and critical thinking and support professional growth and inclusion of marginalized voices for success (Asgari, Silong, Ahmad & Bahaman, 2008). The organizational culture denotes to shared values, assumptions, norms, and behaviors that define how things are done in institution. In academia, this includes how teamwork, hierarchy, response, and innovation are handled (Ali & Musah, 2012). Without inclusive practices, diversity creativities risk amiable symbolic rather than impactful influence and reshape culture by inspiring open dialogue, and continuous learning for the desired outcomes.

The organizational justice includes distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (respectful & dignified interpersonal treatment) as ensured through inclusive culture (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009). The justice perceptions strongly influence motivation, trust, and job satisfaction. A positive culture acts as the vehicle for the inclusion and diversity, making inclusive leadership practices sustainable over time (Ambrose, Hess & Ganesan, 2007). The transformational leadership works on the vision and directs cultural change at organizational level in places of higher learning. The environment where practices of inclusion and diversity may flourish or fail is their organizational culture (Nasir, Zakaria & Zien, 2022). The organizational justice can be defined as how fairly the justice by offering the equal opportunities, arguing about recognition and reward systems that are founded on merit, and establishing trust by means of equitable and transparent decision-making systems (Mandefro, Semela & Bezabih, 2025). Inclusion only makes sense when it is administered by justice it will inevitably fail without it. Diversity in workplace can offer different representations and views, and guarantees the meaningful engagement, and a feeling of belonging in the diverse academic institutions.

Figure 1 Theoretical Framework
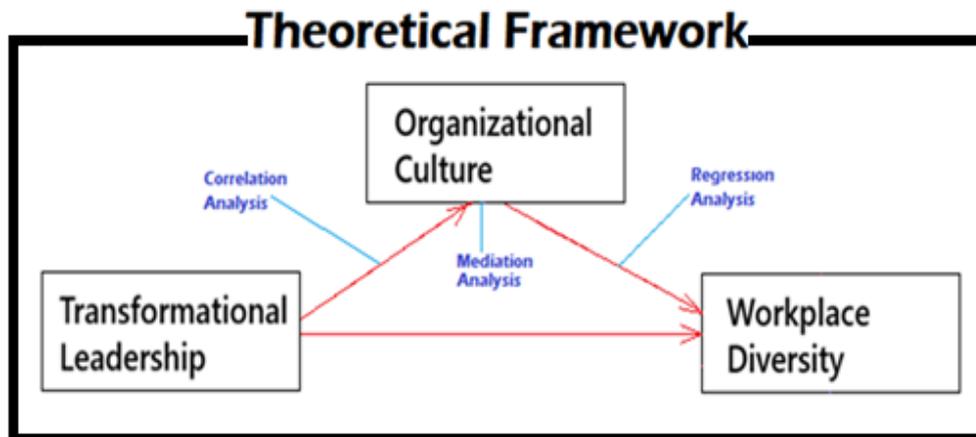
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
The application of research methodologies through particular methods and procedures are used to conduct research in particular context. This study adopted quantitative research design to examine impact of transformational leadership on workplace diversity and inclusion, with organizational culture and organizational justice as mediating variables. In this connection, applying deductive

approach, that is suitable for examining cause-and-effect relationships and drawing generalizable conclusion from findings of sample toward population (Ridenour & Newman, 2008). The planned questionnaire comprising validated measurement scales that were used to assess transformational leadership, organizational justice, culture, workplace diversity, and workplace inclusion (Palys & Atchison, 2014). This strategy enables researcher to statistically test relationships and mediating effects among variables using analytical tools. The target population for present study consists of teachers working in higher education institutions in southern region, KP, Pakistan. The focus was upon teachers who have experience working in transformational leaders and have participated in the diversity initiatives.

A simple random sampling technique was used to ensure representation from various institutional levels. The population consists of 2444 teachers while a sample of 344 was selected by using the statistical formula used for sample-size determination used for analysis. Thus, 344 questionnaires were distributed wherein 330 were recollected, used for analysis. Similarly, convenient sampling, through simple random sampling under purposive sampling was used. The secondary and primary data are always important for conducting the research studies while analyzing for reaching the desired and leading conclusion towards the desired outcomes of research. So, data collection and analysis are important for realizing desired objectives of research (Ridenour & Newman, 2008). The questionnaire was adapted from previous studies on research issues under consideration from different scales for conducting research. The reliability and validity are thus important for realizing desired and leading outcomes over accuracy and completeness by ensuring outcomes in manner as needed and required.

RESULTS OF STUDY

The results of study while examining descriptive statistics and chasing the research hypotheses are produced in this section in order to examine the descriptive analysis along with the investigative relationships among the research variables to extract the leading and desired information and to reach expected conclusion to make decisions about the variables with respect to its acceptance and rejection in study.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Transformational Leadership	330	1.30	4.80	3.2338	.74143
Organizational Culture	330	1.33	4.67	3.0966	.81893
Workplace Diversity	330	1.60	4.60	3.4476	.65600
Valid N (listwise)	330				

The descriptive statistics are used to describe and summarize the main features of the dataset in a quantitative study through and comprehensible way. They are typically first step in data analysis and help the researchers understand the basic characteristics of their data before applying more complex statistical techniques. It provides information about the research variables concerning the sample, mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum response rates wherein the study results

of the current research revealed information about values that are within the required and desired threshold boundaries. Thus, the descriptive statistics provide significant information for describing the research variables.

Table 2 Reliability Analysis

Research Variables	Items	Cronbach Alpha
Transformational Leadership	10	0.884
Organizational Culture	10	0.842
Workplace Diversity	10	0.832
Overall Instrument	30	0.898

The reliability analysis is used in research to assess the internal consistency of scale that is, how well the items in a questionnaire or test measure same construct. The Cronbach Alpha (α) is a coefficient of reliability (consistency). It measures that how closely related a set of items are as a group. The results of reliability provide significant information about the research variables that are above the threshold value (.6) likewise transformational leadership (0.884), organizational culture (0.842), workplace diversity (0.832), instrument (0.898) and reliability statistics provide significant results about internal consistencies among research variables in order to measure the variables from the different perspectives.

Table 3 Correlations Analysis (H$_1$)

Correlations		[1]	[2]	[4]
Transformational	Pearson Correlation	1	.248**	.441**
Leadership [1]	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	330	330	330
Organizational	Pearson Correlation	.248**	1	.282
Culture [2]	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	330	330	330
Workplace Diversity	Pearson Correlation	.441**	.282	1
[4]	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	330	330	330
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

The correlation procedure was used to examine the association among the research issues that are under in this research in order to confirm the strength and direction in association amid research variables. It is used to measure the direction and strength of the linear relationship between two or more variables. It helps researchers comprehend whether and how strongly these variables are associated. The results of correlation confirmed that presence of association like transformational leadership and workplace diversity (R = .441 & P = .000), organizational culture and workplace diversity (R = .282 & P = .000), transformational leadership and organizational culture (R = .248 & P = .000), and consequently from these correlation leading outcomes, the hypothesis about the association is accepted.

Table 4 Regression Analysis (H2)

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	.505a	.255	.248	.56893

Table 5 Regression Analysis (H2)

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	SIG.
1	Regression	36.060	3	12.020	37.135	.000b
	Residual	105.522	326	.324		
	Total	141.582	329			

Table 6 Regression Analysis (H2)

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.
		B	SE	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.741	.192		9.072	.000
	Transformational Leadership	.292	.048	.330	6.043	.000
	Organizational Culture	.153	.040	.166	4.324	.037
a. Predictors: Transformational Leadership & Organizational Culture						
b. Dependent Variable: Workplace Diversity						

The regression procedure was used to examine cause-&-effect relationship among the research variables of different nature aimed to be examined in current research study. Regression analysis is the powerful statistical method used to examine the relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. It helps you predict, explain, and quantify the influence of factors on an outcome variable. The results revealed that there is 25.5% variance in workplace diversity due to predicting variables with significant impact on workplace diversity likewise the transformational leadership (β = .292 & P-value = .000), organizational culture (β = .153 & P-value = .037), and consequently hypothesis about the prediction is accepted from the results and outcomes of regression.

Mediation First Step (a)

Table 7 Model Summary (H3)

R	R Square	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.2482	.1616	.6312	26.2459	1.0000	328.0000	.0000

Table 8 Coefficients of Regression (H3)

Model	Coefficient	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	2.2099	.1668	13.2520	.0000	1.8819	2.5380
Transformational Leadership	.2742	.0535	5.1231	.0000	.1689	.3795
Predicting Variable: Leadership, Criterion Variable: Culture						

Mediation Second & Third Steps (b & ć)

Table 9 Model Summary (H₃)

R	R Square	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.4416	.2950	.3485	33.0180	2.0000	327.0000	.0000

Table 10 Coefficients of Regression (H₃)

Model	Coefficient	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	2.2378	.1950	11.4754	.0000	1.8541	2.6214
Organizational Culture	.2232	.0406	.5697	.0293	2.1031	.0568
Transformational Leadership	.3463	.0489	8.1096	.0000	.3002	.4924

Predicting Variable: Transformational Leadership & Organizational Culture
Criterion Variable: Workplace Diversity

Mediation Fourth Step (c)

Table 11 Model Summary (H₃)

R	R Square	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.4407	.2942	.3478	61.0800	1.0000	328.0000	.0000

Table 12 Coefficients of Regression (H₃)

Model	Coefficient	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	2.1866	.1579	13.8504	.0000	1.8760	2.4972
Transformational Leadership	.3900	.1499	7.8154	.0000	.2918	.4881

Predicting Variable: Transformational Leadership
Criterion Variable: Workplace Diversity

The mediation procedure was used to examine the mediating role of the organizational culture in linking the transformational leadership and workplace diversity by using Hayes process Macro procedure through four different paths of mediation in determining the direct and indirect links and reaching the desired conclusion about the mediation that whether it is a partial mediation or full mediation. The results of first path revealed that there is 16.16% variance in organizational culture is due to transformational leadership (β = .2742 & P-value = .0000). The results of second and third path naked that there is 29.50% variance in workplace diversity is due to organizational culture (β = .2742 & P-value = .0000), and transformational leadership (β = .2742 & P-value = .0000), in the study.

The fourth path of mediation while determining the direct relationship between the predictor and criterion variables revealed that there is 29.42% variance in the workplace diversity is due to the transformational leadership (β = .3900 & P-value = .0000). In this connection, both the direct and

indirect results of mediation provide significant information in reaching the desired mediation decision wherein the results confirmed partial mediating role of organizational culture in linking the transformational leadership and workplace diversity due to decrease in coefficient value from (.3900) in direct relationship to (.3463), while p-values remained unchanged and thus sustained as significant, therefore, from the mediation outcomes, the hypothesis about the mediation is thus partially accepted in study.

DISCUSSION

The inclusive leadership practices are either accommodative or opposing to culture of organization. The aspect of culture is particularly important when the inclusive leadership is viewed to be fair. In these instances employees embrace justice-oriented management and advance diversity programs (Qi, Liu, Wei & Hu, 2019). This leadership, justice, and culture trinity offers an elastic structure of the nature of implementing diversity and used to promote inclusive and diverse work environments is transformational leadership (Cho & Dansereau, 2010). The leadership is the expression of a vision and the intended behaviours, yet, it is organizational culture and justice that give the leadership either chance to either flourish or not (Nasir, Zakaria & Zien, 2022). These hitches notwithstanding, visions are realized depends on the degree in organizational culture embraces leadership and the degree to which framework of justice enforces the same (Mahdinezhad, Suandi, Silong & Omar, 2013). A transformational leader will be able to build culture where everyone will be motivated to reach their goals, and in the process; they will strive to hit their self-established performance goals because of the environment where everyone will feel valued, and they will all have a chance to contribute and prosper.

The leaders are focused upon empowering the employees, creating the culture of trust, and sharing a common vision of the success of organization. The leader provokes new innovative and creative practices by shaking old rules and supporting new ideas. In this linking the leaders describe the convincing vision that encourages follow-ups to share similar goals (Tahir, Abdullah, Ali & Daud, 2014). A diverse team can very well resolve the issues and become creative thinkers and this is best achieved under the leadership of transformational leader (Sehat, Dharma & Indra, 2024). The values of leading transformational change are exhibited by leaders who demonstrate inclusive behaviors and protect the normative values of diversity and inclusion (Buil, Martínz & Matute, 2019) The organizational culture has an impact on the way employees interact with each other and the way they perceive and carry out their work (Mandefro, Semela & Bezabih, 2025). Culture has great influence on the effectiveness of diversity and inclusion strategies. In this connection, when the employees feel that they are an integral part of the organization, there is a higher chance that interested in organizational values and work they are supposed to perform better to chase the tasks and ensure success.

CONCLUSION

The current study investigated how transformational leadership influences workplace diversity particularly influences of organizational culture. As demonstrated by evidence, transformational leadership, when based on some positive culture, boosts diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

The transformational leaders develop culture of inclusive and diverse practices which is achieved by their inspirational vision, individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation. The study proved culture as mediator in linkage between transformational leadership and result of diversity and inclusion in workplace. The inclusive cultures make the working environment in which various employees develop belonging and interest as required for comprehending the situations towards the desired and leading consequences. The current study found that positive culture of diversity and organizational justice, that is fair treatment in processes, decisions, and interpersonal relations, must be supplemented with leadership. Also, the view of justice in an organization verified the existence of justice enhanced the relationship hence showing that organizational justice is a crucial element of the trust and inclusion in concerned institutions. In practice, study says that to enhance diversity and inclusion, institutions must work on enhancing the transformational leadership, yet, they must also empower the inclusive organizational culture together with the culture of justice across the institution.

Recommendations

1. The institutions are required to invest in the leadership development programs that foster empathy, vision, and inclusive decision-making to drive diversity and inclusion efforts in the institutions aimed at providing equal opportunities for development to employees that may lead towards success.
2. There is a need to ensure fairness in recruitment, rewards, promotion, as well as conflict resolution to build trust and sense of equity among all employees. The assurance of fair and just decisions nurtures the behaviors of employees toward the desirability in attaining the leading consequences.
3. The institutions and leadership are required to promote values of respect, openness, and collaboration by embedding the diversity into organizational policies, communication and daily practices that may inspire the concerned employees & teachers to attain the desired leading tasks wholeheartedly.
4. The incessantly assess diversity metrics, gather employee feedback and conduct training to reinforce inclusive behaviors and correct systemic biases. Make diversity and inclusion a core part of the business strategy by aligning it with the performance metrics and leadership accountability for success.

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