Bridging the Gap: Navigating Human Resources Management Bias to Promote Equality and Inclusivity in the Workplace.

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ABSTRACT

In contemporary, multifaceted workplaces, proficient human resource management is essential for organisational success. Nonetheless, despite advancements in fostering a work climate that encourages diversity and inclusion, specific individuals still encounter ongoing challenges of workplace discrimination, inequality, and inequitable treatment. This conceptual paper explores the strategies to navigate HRM bias to promote equality and an inclusive workplace. Human resource management bias manifests in various forms, such as discriminatory practices in recruitment and promotion, unconscious biases in performance evaluations and feedback, a lack of diversity at both managerial and non-managerial levels, and rigid or insensitive policies that fail to accommodate diverse employee needs. Mastering the ability to surmount such prejudices is essential not just for fostering equity and an inclusive work environment but also for maximising individual potential and improving organisational performance. Some strategies to mitigate workplace bias in human resource management include executing anti-discriminatory policies, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training, blind recruitment methods, using technology and cultivating a workplace culture emphasizing equality and inclusion. If implemented effectively, these tactics help reduce bias in human resource management processes and practices within businesses.

Keywords: discrimination, equality, diversity, inclusion, human resource management bias, unconscious bias

INTRODUCTION

Despite the advancements in comprehending and mitigating biases in HRM procedures, remain prevalent in HR management, presenting considerable issues in organisational personnel management. Effectively addressing these HRM biases is essential for promoting a fair and inclusive workplace and optimizing talent potential and competitive advantage.

Human resources management bias informs the HRM practices (Jordan et al., 2019). Unconscious bias is essential for social functioning, although it can lead to detrimental processes and outcomes (Derous et al., 2016; Jordan et al., 2019). Bias that propels discrimination in HRM techniques emerge from entrenched societal stereotypes and are also evident in the workplace. HRM biases can result in unfair and unreasonable decisions (Bourke & Dillion, 2016), leading to systematic discrimination, stifling innovation, and fostering a negative brand reputation (Atamanik & Garr, 2017). Subconscious attitudes, referred to as prejudice, can significantly impact staff decision-making at multiple phases, including recruitment, performance evaluation, promotion, compensation, and training. The effects of bias may be indistinguishable regardless of its conscious or unconscious nature. Both can engender disparities in opportunity and treatment and suboptimal decision-making. Thus, unconscious biases influence HRM policies and practices.

Studies have shown the prevalence of biased decision-making in HRM practices like recruitment procedures. A survey in Germany by Weichselbaumer (2016) demonstrates that individuals with foreign-sounding names and those donning a headscarf receive markedly less favourable responses. The candidate with a German name

attained the highest success rate, garnering positive comments. In an American study, racial and ethnic discrimination in hiring procedures and performance assessments is a critical concern. A survey by the Pew Research Centre (2023) indicates that approximately 64% of Black adults perceive bias and discrimination based on a job applicant's race or ethnicity as a significant issue, compared to 49% of Asian adults, 41% of Hispanic adults, and a lesser 30% of White adults.

Furthermore, of a sample size of 2,000 in the United Kingdom (UK), people who are currently or were formerly employed indicated that around one-third (30%) of participants reported encountering or observing bias throughout their employment cycle (Bratley, 2024). In a concurrent study in Switzerland, Thomas & Reimann (2023) investigated the bias blind spot related to interview biases in recruiting decision-making. The results reveal that participants regarded the typical human resources personnel as more prone to bias than themselves. Moreover, male HR personnel demonstrated a more significant bias blind spot than female colleagues. Meanwhile, Human Rights Watch (2020) indicates that although Chinese legislation forbids gender discrimination in employment, workplace discrimination remains a widespread problem in that country. The Chinese government claims to uphold gender equality in employment; however, its hiring policies are markedly discriminatory.

The socio-economic crises in several African nations are intensified by ethnic bias and favouritism, which have consistently compromised the notion of economic agent impartiality. These practices have fostered discontent among marginalized ethnic groups, exacerbated conflicts, and hindered development throughout the continent (Ilorah, 2009). Adisa et al. (2019) conducted a study that included 32 employees from high-street banks in Lagos, offering significant insights into women's working experiences at different levels in the banking sector. All of whom have faced varying degrees of prejudice. Several participants said this bias negatively impacts their performance, leading to decreased engagement, decreased inclination to express their opinions, and a reduced frequency of idea submission. The reduction in self-esteem resulting from workplace bias is directly linked to the quality of an employee's performance, making this a critical concern for employers to tackle. This association has been validated by a study involving 120 personnel from several government parastatals throughout Lagos State (Muideen, 2018) proved that the unconscious biases of organisational leaders adversely affect work satisfaction.

Meanwhile, Black African women in South Africa continue to be under-represented in managerial positions within the business sector since the advent of democracy, thus gender and racial bias. The private sector's evident lack of dedication to enhancing the representation of Black African women in managerial positions is demonstrated by its intentional use of race-based recruitment practices and its inability to cultivate and advance adequately qualified women into these roles (Matotoka & Odeku, 2021). These findings underscore the enduring issues related to bias in the workplace.

Implicit and Explicit Bias in the Workplace

The Racial Equity Tools (2021) defines implicit or hidden bias as the various methods by which organisations structure patterns, generating tangible real-world consequences. Implicit bias constitutes a component of the inequality framework that legitimizes discriminatory policies, practices, and behaviours prevalent in mainstream culture and narratives. To be ethically accountable for an action, the individual must possess a degree of awareness and control over their actions (Nadler & McDonnell, 2012).

The National Centre for Cultural Competence at Georgetown University (2021) defines explicit bias as when an individual is acutely aware of their opinions, feelings, attitudes, or preferences, and their corresponding acts are executed with intention. For instance, an inequitable allocation of rewards, assignments, and training chances is predicated on deliberate biases. Exposure to institutional and cultural prejudice has allowed stereotypes and biases to infiltrate individuals' psyches.

Individuals need to understand the distinction between holding others accountable for discriminatory actions perceived as stemming from implicit rather than explicit beliefs. Studies indicate that unconscious and explicit biases can influence individuals' judgments, decisions, and behaviours in the workplace (Bertrand &

Mullainathan, 2004). Employees frequently lack awareness of the impact of their implicit biases; however, they are typically cognisant of how their explicit attitudes affect their actions (Dovidio et al., 2002).

Manifestation of Bias on Some Human Resources Practices

Bias in HRM practices can manifest itself in different ways. Bias in human resources management can be either conscious or unconscious and may present itself subtly and overtly (d'Orgeville et al., 2014). Systemic bias entrenched patterns of inequitable bias are embedded in and perpetuated by an organisation's HRM policies, practices, and procedures. Some of the HRM biases are highlighted below.

Implicit Bias in Performance Assessments and Feedback

Biased performance assessments compromise the meritocratic objectives of talent management systems, which aim to recognise, cultivate, and retain talent, enhance employee efficacy, and foster robust and inventive teams (Correll, 2016). Unconscious biases may result in the deflation or inflation of employee evaluations, potentially leading to significant consequences in critical scenarios influenced by performance assessments, such as administering more severe criticism or discipline to specific groups for identical behaviours. Bias in performance evaluation diminishes opportunities for career advancement and access to rewarding, innovative, and challenging positions. This increases attrition rates among employees from historically marginalized groups, thereby causing companies to forfeit talent and the advantages of diverse innovation (Wyatt & Silvester, 2015).

Lack Of Diversity in the Workforce and Leadership

A diverse workforce and leadership are necessary for advancing equality and inclusion in the workplace. Work processes and corporate culture are shaped through a top-down approach. The employee experience is essential, as employees desire to feel secure, valued, appreciated, and included in the workplace, contributing their complete selves to their work. Senior positions' lack of representation makes employees feel included and understood.

Insufficient Provisions for Employees with Disabilities

Workplace accommodations are a fundamental duty of all employers to their employees with disabilities. However, the situation on the ground shows a different story. Fifteen percent of the global population encounter various forms of disability, rendering them one of the largest and most diverse demographic groups in society (World Health Organisation, 2011). Individuals with disabilities have historically and currently faced marginalization, as ableism, or the advantage of being non-disabled, establishes obstacles to accessing power, resources, and opportunities (Baynton, 2013). In Europe, the employment rate for individuals with impairments is 47 percent, but it is 67 percent for those without disabilities (Jones, 2021). In the United States, the employment gap of those without disabilities is significant, with 19.3 percent employed vs 66.3 percent not employed (US Department of Labour, 2021). Projections indicate that this inequality is widening over time. Anand & Sevak (2017) suggest that over one-third of unemployed individuals with disabilities identify job obstacles that may be mitigated through workplace modifications or accommodations, including an inaccessible work environment and inadequate transportation options.

Workplace accommodations, such as flexible work hours or adjusted job responsibilities, significantly enhance the capacity of numerous individuals with disabilities to engage in the workforce (Anand & Sevak, 2017). Workplace discrimination related to disability primarily arises from biases rooted in misinformation or prejudice. Individuals with disabilities are frequently viewed as being less productive (Beatty et al., 2019) and are often undervalued. They overestimate the expenses of implementing workplace accommodations to mitigate disadvantages for disabled individuals (Heymann et al., 2014). Insufficient awareness of disability can influence decisions throughout the job process. For example, during the recruitment phase, insufficient knowledge may partially explain the reluctance to employ impaired individuals (Bonaccio et al., 2020). Motivated by these perceptions and underlying fears of potential discrimination due to their condition, numerous individuals with non-visible disabilities face a challenging choice about disclosure (von Schrader et al., 2014). Evidence indicates

that the provision of workplace accommodations and workplace bias influence job outcomes for individuals with disabilities (Cook et al. 2015; Kristman et al. 2016).

Discrimination in Hiring, Promotion, and Opportunities.

The recruitment and selection processes establish the groundwork for workforce diversity and inclusion. The recruitment process is a critical period where implicit prejudice may manifest. The potential to employ an individual suited for a position is compromised when recruiters permit unconscious prejudice to affect their or a hiring manager's judgments. Gender and the stereotype associated with job needs might lead to bias stemming from an unequal distribution of males and females in a vocation (Glick, 1991).

Unconscious bias in workplace hiring originates during interviews, establishing a foundation for failure in the hiring process. For instance, when an individual is making a hiring decision for a position predominantly occupied by men yet devoid of requisite masculine or assertive traits, the archetype of a successful employee may still be male. This perception may prompt the decision-maker/s to regard a male candidate as more suitable for the role than a female candidate. Meanwhile, in promotion bias, employees may be unjustly disregarded for promotions or leadership positions due to biases held by decision-makers. Human resources management biases in career progression are predicated on cultural fit, which can perpetuate homogeneity and presuppose that individuals from specific groups lack leadership capabilities.

The Intersectionality of HRM Bias

Bias in the management of human resources (HRM) can take many different shapes that interact with one another, therefore compounding their negative consequences in the office. For example, gender prejudice could interact with racial prejudice to produce exacerbated prejudice against women of colour in recruitment, advancement, and performance reviews (Rosette et al., 2018). Likewise, age prejudice can intensify disability prejudice, therefore unfairly affecting older disabled workers in terms of career development prospects or workplace accommodations (Shore et al., 2018). Often systematic, these overlapping prejudices are ingrained in company rules and procedures and can support stereotypes, restrict diversity, and lower staff motivation and output (Opie & Freeman, 2020). Multiple prejudices coming together produce obstacles more challenging to spot and handle, hence sustaining inequality in the office.

Role of Diversity and Inclusion in Human Resource Management Practices

Loden & Rosener (1991) define diversity as the characteristics that highlight the necessity to accommodate individuals who differ from the members of one's group. This diversity is evident in multiple dimensions, including ethnicity, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. According to Mondal (2020), diversity fundamentally defines an organisation through its HRM practices, affecting worker makeup and general dynamics and cohesion. Organisations that foster diverse and inclusive environments exhibit greater adaptability and creativity and are magnets for attracting premier talent.

Diversity and inclusion management must be prioritised in HRM practices across all businesses. Research indicates that diverse and inclusive leadership teams are 21% more likely to achieve 19% greater revenue attributable to enhanced innovation (Lorenzo et al., 2018) and exceed their counterparts in profitability (Dixon-Fyle et al., 2020). Diversity and inclusion guarantee that HRM system processes, policies, and programs are equitable, enabling the organisation to effectively confront bias and eradicate obstacles to full participation. This is not a singular occurrence but a continuous process. Diversity is the metric; inclusion is the means (Deloitte, 2016). Diversity prioritizes quantity, whereas inclusion prioritizes quality. It is essential to integrate diversity with inclusion, guaranteeing equitable opportunities over the employment life-cycle. The advantages of diversity and inclusion in human resource management yield the following benefits.

Enhanced Ingenuity, Creativity, and Problem-Solving Capabilities

Reynolds and Lewis (2017) discovered that diverse teams resolve issues more swiftly than homogenous teams by contributing new ideas and creative solutions to obstacles. Thus, organisations can leverage this abundant resource to foster innovation, creativity, problem-solving, and excellence (Cox, 2014). Engaging individuals

from diverse cultural backgrounds enhances cognitive flexibility, encouraging innovative problem-solving methods. Employees perceive inclusivity in the workplace when afforded equitable options for problem-solving throughout their whole career lifetime.

Augmented Reputation and Brand Identity

Organisations that emphasize diversity are frequently regarded as socially responsible and progressive. A favourable reputation for diversity and inclusion in the workplace can draw customers, clients, and investors who prioritise these values (Rao & Tilt, 2016). A prolonged affiliation with employees typically enhances the company's public image. Nonetheless, this enduring relationship can only occur when the organisation fosters a varied workplace culture in which every person feels valued and respected. Consequently, organisations with heterogeneous staff are more inclined to keep their personnel for a prolonged duration.

Improved Organisational Culture

Employees in a diverse workplace typically hold a more positive perception of their organisation. Establishing a diverse and inclusive workplace culture enhances employee attraction and retention, fostering a healthy work environment. This multicultural mosaic is evident in workplaces, as individuals from varied origins unite to provide their distinct perspectives and skills. Furthermore, organisations that promote the inclusion of women and other minority groups in leadership positions foster a constructive workplace atmosphere for potential employees. Inclusivity in HRM practices also promotes and maintains a sense of belonging, valuing and respecting employees' beliefs, abilities, lifestyles, and backgrounds. This does not imply universal agreement among all individuals at all times. It signifies that despite their disagreements, they remain united.

Augmented Decision-Making

Incorporating varied perspectives mitigates groupthink, fosters critical evaluation, and cultivates a culture of ongoing learning and enhancement (Robinson & Dechant, 1997). Diverse teams can enhance decision-making efficacy. A heterogeneous workforce provides distinct viewpoints, enhancing creativity, varied new choices, and improved product development. Investing in Diversity and Inclusion (DI) can enhance employee wellness and yield beneficial results for company outcomes. Diversity and inclusion are essential for fostering workplace well-being and achieving optimal decision-making (Krause, 2022).

Creating Diversity and Inclusion Landscape to Navigate Bias in Human Resource Management.

Organisations should use methodical, evidence-based approaches to properly tackle prejudice in human resources management procedures and promote inclusiveness and diversity. Promoting diversity and inclusion to mitigate HRM bias necessitates deliberate and strategic initiatives from leaders and organisations. Furthermore, the likelihood of success is significantly enhanced when diversity and inclusion are regarded as a fundamental business function rather than a peripheral HR activity. Diversity and inclusion initiatives must be customised for each organisation's unique needs rather than adopting a universal strategy. The overarching strategies for the diversity and inclusion plan encompass the following fundamental components:

Implement Diversity and Inclusion Training Initiatives.

Conducting regular training sessions helps enhance awareness of unconscious bias, microaggressions, and the significance of diversity and inclusion. Training on diversity should be accompanied by responsibility policies such linking diversity objectives to assessments of leadership performance (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016). Organisations, HRM practitioners, and leaders are responsible for equipping employees with the skills necessary to confront and surmount biases in the workplace. To create practical diversity training, HRM might adopt a strategic approach to improve organisational inclusion. In addition, organisations can also create inclusive mentoring programs and worker resource groups to assist under-represented workers and guarantee fair career progression (Thomas, 2020).

Customisation of diversity training is of utmost importance in addressing the unique needs of the organisation and guaranteeing its pertinence (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Organisations should reframe diversity training to focus

on their capabilities, educating and raising awareness of bias and strategies for transformation (Bezrukova et al., 2016). Organisations aiming to implement successful, evidence-based diversity training should prioritise reframing these sessions to enhance awareness of bias as an initial step while also providing participants with methods for behavioural modification (Carter et al., 2020). This produces superior outcomes compared to the conventional practice of shaming and criticising individuals from the majority culture.

Furthermore, when voluntary diversity training focuses on equipping participants with skills rather than merely fostering awareness, the likelihood of achieving long-term good outcomes increases. Enhancing empathy via compassion training can serve as an effective strategy to mitigate resistance arising from the relinquishment of power and control. Fostering compassion for others cultivates comprehension and diminishes ego defensiveness (Neff, 2011).

In the same vein, workplace disability awareness training can positively affect both companies and employees. Management training sessions can enhance understanding of impaired employees' issues and mitigate bias associated with disability (Kennedy Jr. et al., 2019). It can improve comprehension and acceptance of disabilities, foster an inclusive and supportive atmosphere, and elevate the professional experience for all individuals. Diversity training provides an opportunity to inform the majority group members about the magnitude of inequity. Awareness of disabilities in the workplace is crucial in enhancing employee skills to recognise and mitigate unconscious biases, foster an environment devoid of prejudice, and promote the full potential of all individuals.

Create and Enforce Inclusive HRM Policies and Practices.

HRM is crucial in formulating anti-discrimination policies to create a fair workplace. HR systems mustn't be de-biased in isolation. They must be integrated into a comprehensive diversity strategic plan led by senior management. Organisations must implement thorough diversity and inclusion policies alongside strategies and processes that guarantee fairness and equitable opportunity for everyone. These policies are established to provide a uniform and equitable approach to business efforts and etiquette and delineate the expectations for leaders and staff.

Inclusive policies significantly influence corporate conduct by providing equitable practices for all employees, irrespective of colour, gender, age, disability, or sexual orientation. HRM is essential in implementing clear consequences for any breaches of these regulations. This strategy fosters a culture of accountability and emphasises the organisation's commitment to upholding a discrimination-free environment, anchored in respect and equity. These policies must be routinely assessed and revised to meet the organisation's changing demands and problems. The following diversity and inclusive HRM policies may be considered:

Recruitment Policy

Establishing a secure and equitable work environment commences with recruitment. Effective recruitment entails acquiring suitable candidates for appropriate positions, enabling organisations to further their diversity and inclusion initiatives. The recruitment policy aims to eliminate explicit and unconscious biases from the process. Incorporating blind recruiting methods-such as anonymising resumes-and structured interviews in the policy can help to lower unconscious prejudice in recruiting (Kang et al., 2016). Identifying implicit prejudice to establish a more diverse hiring process is essential for business sustainability and innovation to mitigate bias.

A recruiting policy can mitigate bias through a strategy of employing gender-neutral job descriptions and concealing specific identifying information about candidates through the application processes. This prompts recruiters to assess candidates based on pertinent professional information. Employing skill-based interview enquiries that emphasise each candidate's job-related qualifications. This recruitment policy should be designed to assist managers in identifying the most qualified candidates for the position, rather than those they favour personally. This recruitment process mitigates unconscious bias, enhancing diversity and inclusivity in employment.

Accessibility and Accommodation Policies

The accommodations and accessibility policy supports individuals with disabilities by ensuring that all workplace services and facilities are appropriate for use, promoting independence and respect for their dignity. Addressing ableism in the workplace entails confronting the fact that employees may feel unheard or may be compelled to conceal their disabilities. Increasing the participation and visibility of individuals with disabilities might facilitate the identification of obstacles to self-disclosure and alleviate unnecessary difficulties (Baker et al., 2018; Sherbin et al., 2017). Many firms still require a complete strategy for recruiting, advancing, and retaining employees with disabilities (Khan et al., 2019). Consequently, evaluating current practices and engaging with disabled individuals regarding obstacles and program design can benefit organisations. To formulate these policies, qualitative interview insights emphasise the necessity of recognising operational problems in daily activities while considering accessible demands (Baird & Reese, 2018).

Anti-Harassment Policy

Harassment encompasses any offensive, unwelcome, or unsolicited behaviour that is repeated multiple times solely to insult, intimidate, torment, abuse, or irritate an individual, thereby inducing discomfort or fostering an inhospitable work environment (Secunda et al., 2018). The anti-harassment policy advocates for a workplace without sexual harassment or any form of harassment. This policy intends to establish a secure and tranquil environment where all persons are esteemed and to guarantee the absence of gender-based harassment that obstructs equal opportunity in all facets of employment.

Most countries globally acknowledge the importance of protecting employees from harassment, specifically sexual harassment in the workplace, through various enactments. For example, Zimbabwe observes this through its Labour Act 28:01, in South Africa harassment is covered under Workplace Harassment release in 2022, the United Kingdom through the Equality Act 2010, Malaysia through the Anti-sexual Harassment Act 2022 (ASHA 2022), the United States of America recognizes harassment via its Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of (ADEA) 1967, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and in Australia there is the Sex Discrimination Act 1984. These anti-harassment policies and statutes explicitly declare that harassment and discrimination are intolerable in workplaces. An anti-harassment policy must delineate the behaviours that are discriminatory or harassing and convey the seriousness with which these matters are addressed.

The policy that applies to all employees must contain a succinct statement elucidating the rationale behind the company's introduction of this specific policy. In addition, the policy must also delineate procedures for addressing allegations, designate claim contact points, outline the investigative process, and specify potential repercussions.

Promoting an Inclusive Culture and Communication

An inclusive organisational culture is fundamental for effective diversity management, allowing organisations to leverage the capabilities of their varied workforce while fostering a sense of belonging (Cox & Blake, 1991). Leaders should establish a psychologically healthy workplace culture prioritizing open communication and collaboration. Human resource management can create open forums that enable employees to exchange ideas, articulate problems, and participate actively in discussions around diversity and inclusion. These channels cultivate a sense of belonging, indicating that varied opinions are appreciated and promoting a culture of free debate (Ospina & Foldy, 2009).

A work culture that values and validates all individuals within the organisation results in a robust and vibrant entity, establishing an excellent foundation for cultivating a dynamic and prosperous workforce. Inclusion is not a singular occurrence. It must be deliberate and consistent with all HR functions and processes. This exemplifies diversity. When an organisation establishes an inclusive culture, individuals from various backgrounds are drawn to it, successfully recruiting a varied staff. Diversity is recognized as a catalyst for improved performance and essential in defining a company's culture, brand, and overall efficacy. Establishing an inclusive Organisational culture necessitates deliberate actions by HRM to implement practices that promote diversity and embed it within its fundamental principles and operations (Kalev et al., 2006). Furthermore, HRM is responsible for eliminating

obstacles that hinder communication, comprehension, and collaboration among employees from diverse backgrounds. By cultivating an inclusive culture, organisations can guarantee that diversity management transcends superficial initiatives and becomes fundamentally embedded in the organisation's identity.

Leadership that Champions Diversity and Inclusion

Organisational leaders act as pioneers of change, establishing the atmosphere by actively promoting diversity and inclusion (Nishii & Özbilgin, 2007). The leadership of an organisation must explicitly endorse equitable and impartial HR processes that eliminate obstacles and enhance diversity and inclusion. Instead of issuing ambiguous declarations regarding inclusion, leaders should initiate concrete measures such as conducting policy audits, mandating anti-bias training, and establishing representation objectives. Leaders have to actively promise diversity by publicly establishing quantifiable inclusion goals and promoting an organisational culture that respects different points of view (Ely & Thomas, 2020). Leadership must be committed to impartial, comprehensive inclusion by endorsing concrete initiatives for equal hiring, compensation analysis, and advancement possibilities.

Conversely, suppose managers cultivate the ability to critically reflect on their implicit prejudices and enact HR policies to mitigate unconscious biases. This represents a significant advancement toward inclusive leadership and establishing diverse, inclusive, and transparent organisations (Sanders et al., 2020). Organisational leaders must acknowledge their obligation to promote diversity and inclusion within their workplace and demonstrate an unwavering commitment to implementing their policies despite encountering setbacks and hurdles.

Organisations can recognise and develop leaders dedicated to diversity and can act as exemplars. For example, KPMG conducted leadership training through reverse mentoring to bridge the gap ad enhance an inclusive working environment. Microsoft also amplified the black voices in its organisation by increasing Black representation as well as increasing its DEI internal budget. Creating a diverse and inclusive workplace is a moral obligation and a strategic need that should prioritise DI initiatives on organisations' agendas. Inclusive leadership training (Kuknor & Bhattacharya, 2020) aids leaders in fostering openness and transparency, cultivating awareness of their biases, augmenting cultural competency, and empowering others. Cultural and Organisational transformation necessitates support and endorsement from leadership and executive tiers (Sashkin, 2012). By adopting DI, leaders meet their moral and ethical obligations to their employees, local communities, and society.

Role of Technology in Reducing Bias in HRM Practices.

By bringing objectivity, improving openness, and automating fair decision-making procedures, technology helps to reduce prejudice in HRM significantly. Provided the algorithms are trained on varied and impartial datasets, artificial intelligence and machine learning may help lower human bias in hiring by evaluating resumes based on skills rather than demographic considerations (Raghavan et al., 2020). Blind recruiting tools have been demonstrated to enhance diversity in hiring by anonymising candidate information including names, gender, age. Predictive analytics can also find bias trends in performance evaluations, promotions, and compensation, hence helping companies to act (Cowgill, 2018). For example, to reduce bias and focus on candidates' talents and qualifications, companies like Deloitte, Google, and the BBC have been known to use blind recruitment tools to help eliminate and identify information from resumes.

But technology is not a cure-all; badly constructed artificial intelligence could exacerbate or even reinforce current prejudices (Mehrabi et al., 2021). Organisations have to audit or review algorithms for impartiality, employ varied training data, and have human control in HR decision-making to avoid this. Further supporting fair HR practices are diversity analytics platforms like Textio for bias free job descriptions, as well as inclusive AI tools such as Pymetrics for skills-based assessments (Dattner et al., 2019). Eventually, if used responsibly and intelligently, technology can be a strong instrument for promoting diversity inclusion and equity in human resources management.

CONCLUSION

Diversity and inclusion initiatives represent an organisational journey rather than a mere check-the-box exercise. Organisations must progress beyond mere tolerance of differences and actively embrace the diverse attributes of
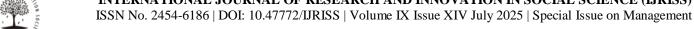
their personnel. A fundamental duty of human resources is to adhere to the principle of inclusive excellence to foster an environment conducive to the success of employees from diverse backgrounds. Achieving this objective necessitates offering continuous diversity and inclusion training, identifying and eliminating institutional obstacles to equal employment opportunities and physical obstructions for individuals with disabilities, endorsing diversity and inclusion initiatives, compliance oversight, policy revisions, and strategic collaboration. Organisations must cultivate an appreciation for, respect for, and understanding of the differences among their personnel. A diverse, egalitarian, and inclusive workplace transcends compliance with regulatory requirements. Effective diversity and inclusion planning commences with the steadfast commitment of top management across all tiers. Consequently, all components and people of the organisation must participate in diversity and inclusion activities throughout the planning and execution phases. This necessitates continuous dedication and initiative from leaders and managers. Establishing a genuinely tolerant and inclusive working environment necessitates holding individuals accountable for their everyday words, actions, and behaviours.

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