

## **Nigeria-India Transnational Research on Organizational Diversity: Evidence from Fast Moving Consumer Goods, Financial and Information Technology Industries**

Dr. S.M. Shariq Abbas<sup>1</sup>, Mr. Hussaini Samaila<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Head, Department of Business Administration, Yobe State University, Damaturu, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Faculty, Department of Business Administration, Yobe State University, Damaturu, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** Nigeria is the biggest economy in Africa and one of the biggest in the world, at the same time India is the third largest economy globally. Despite of some hiccups in recent past, there are big companies operating in Nigeria, while India has many multinational corporations working on its shores. The present study which concentrates on the issue of organizational diversity is relevant in the context of both the countries as the business organizations in these two countries have employees from very diverse socio economic background, religion, tribe, ethnic background, language, gender and the like. Thus studying organizational diversity becomes imperative for practicing managers in these regions for proper functioning and productivity in their organizations. To study the awareness level and attitude of employees towards organizational diversity, present study was taken up in Borno state in North Eastern Nigeria, and compared with the Indian data, testing various variables in the process. The industries selected for the study were Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG), Information Technology (IT) and Financial Services industries. The research at hand employs non-experimental, descriptive, and quantitative research design adopting convenience sampling technique. Primary data was collected through a questionnaire having elements to gauge the awareness level of employees towards organizational diversity, Likert type scale for attitude measurement and section on demographic profile of the respondents. The raw data was analyzed and hypotheses tested through Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16 software. The statistical procedures used for the research were Cronbach's Alpha, Pearson Correlation and Chi Square Test along with use of means and percentages. Various key findings emerged on awareness level, behavior and attitudinal dimensions as a result of the analysis of data; overall it was found that Nigerian employees were more tolerant to organizational diversity as compared to their Indian counterparts.

**Keywords:** Nigeria, India, Employees, Organizational Diversity, FMCG, IT and Financial Sector

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### **I. Introduction and Review of Literature**

In organizations diversity means the co-existence of employees from various socio-cultural environments, which include cultural variables for instance race, gender, age, colour, physical ability, ethnicity among others. The broader definition of diversity even so includes national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, values, ethnic culture, education, language, lifestyle, beliefs, physical appearance and economic status (Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 2000).

Joplin & Daus (1997) have pointed out that in the organizations, towards diversity the attitudes vary from intolerance to tolerance and even appreciation. Discrimination in employment has been reported even in developed countries like Australia and the UK (Bennington & Wein, 2000; Holly, 1998). Nonetheless to build the trust, admiration, loyalty and respect towards the leaders in supporting the management decision, transformational leadership behaviour should be exhibited by the managers in the organizations. Consequently in organizations culture of diversity should be pushed so that no employee should have a feeling of being disregarded or overlooked (Ozigbo, 2011).

As put by Adigun (1995), Nigeria is home to approximately 200 diverse ethnic groups, while Otite (2000) put it as more than 389 ethnic groups, making it a nation of cultural diversity, even many states within have a substantial extent of "domestic multiculturalism". More than half of Nigerian population of one hundred and sixty million is of working age and organizational managers are likely to confront the critical issue of diversity management at work place (Ugwuzor, 2014). Further according to the author in his study which found that even in firms where a minority ethnic group seems to be in the majority, tension and infighting can be created as a result of differences like dialect, village, clan and kin group, hampering firms' efficiency.

There is big element of ethno-linguistic, regional identities and ethnic bias in private sector consisting of banks, media, civil society in Nigeria (Mustapha, 2005). According to Owoyemi, Elegbede & Gbajumo-Sheriff, (2011), in Nigeria the human resource management practices are influenced by socio-cultural diversities. The authors additionally add that for employment purposes there is excessive dependence on culture,

language, religion, gender and educational qualifications in the country. Thus for a regular Nigerian to get employed, these factors play a huge role.

Coming to the Indian context, according to Meena (2015) the decisions (recruitment, promotions, transfers, work-life balance, group communication, team work, social acceptance by colleagues, sexual orientation etc.) in Indian organizations and bias thereof is affected by various dimensions of diversity. The most important element of diversity in India has been caste and according to (Hutton, 1980), there are about 3,000 castes in India and each being a social unit in itself. Even in several organizations and workplaces the negative aspects of caste system can be found (Woodward & Saini, 2006). Nonetheless consistent with the findings of Rao (2012) and Gebert (2011) religious diversity in Indian workplaces is acceptable, its sans conflicts, despite of the fact that the country is having assorted religions and 122 major languages. Regionalism, having its cultural heritage, folklore, myths, symbolism and historical traditions also is a component of diversity, as for instance more traditional dress code is followed in South India as compared to Northern or Eastern parts of India (Meena op. cit).

Therefore it can be noted that Nigeria and India are diverse countries in African and the Asian continents having a number of languages, religions, tribes, dress code, ethnicity etc. Thus workplaces in the two countries would have employees from varied backgrounds, possessing their own cultural inhibitions and norms, which make it relevant to understand the concept of diversity if companies and managers from other parts of the world have to set up shop there.

Often these diversities may lead to organizational conflict or disliking which may be covert or at times be overt. As aptly put by Ukachukwu & Iherionhanna (2013), contemporary work organizations which have employees of multicolored backdrops can be impending cause of organizational conflict. Further as added by Afolabi & Omole (2011) the diversity in personality along with other points of diversity affects the behavior outcomes of the workers in organizations. However as pointed by Foldy (2004), Choi & Rainey (2010) and Pitts (2005) the conflicts are natural as a result of new and different perspectives blending into organizations due to varied workforce, conflicts can be legitimate disputes over the domains and content of organizational goals and action. It is very important that the organizational leaders steer clear of discrimination and should display good standards of ethical and moral conduct (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

A great deal of research is done on race as diversity, putting emphasis on positive effect of diversity vis-à-vis race (Watson, Kumar & Michaelsen, 1993; McLeod, Lobel & Cox, 1996) as well as the pessimistic view which talked of conflict in heterogeneous teams (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Studies have also asserted that women at all levels of their work life face hurdles which negatively affect their career (Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989; Tsui et al., 1992; Marlow et al., 1995). Additionally, older the worker, he is more likely to face age bias and inequitable treatment, it has been the result of many researches done in recent years particularly so in late 1990s (Perry & Finkelstein, 1999; Barnes-Farrell et al., 2002; Shore et al., 2003; DeArmond et al., 2006). Furthermore, researches like that of Blum, Fields & Goodman (1994) has also established that companies with higher diversity tend to provide lower salaries and have higher employee turnover.

According to Havenga (2002) cultural and racial disparities can lead to organizational conflict which are dysfunctional in nature, thus there is a need for positive appreciation of organizational diversity to avoid it. Moreover according to Cassell (1996), attaching value to diversity entails that it might become a source of competitive advantage, quality of organizational life and be good for business. In a study of 396 employees of a range of companies in Australia it was found that 93% of such organizations reported a zero-tolerance level of workplace discrimination in recruitment (Allen, Dawson, Wheatley & White, 2004). Through Affirmative Action Programs, South Africa is also making amends of its past segregation and discrimination policies by promoting blacks and other minorities in the appointments in managerial positions (Horwitz et al. 1996; Van Jaarsveld, 2000).

The effect of cultural diversity on interaction processes and performance was analyzed by Watson et al. (1993) among 173 undergraduate students on the basis of ethnic and national differences. Culturally diverse groups were found to be more effective in tasks like identifying problem perspectives and generating solution alternatives as compared to homogeneous groups. This corresponds to the findings of Allen et al. (2004) that workforce diversity is capable of bringing competitive advantage as assorted perspective can facilitate unique and novel approaches to problem-solving, leading to improved organizational performance. Cordero et al. (1996) additionally suggest that, for more routine tasks homogeneity of group is better and for more complex and interdependent tasks heterogeneity is preferred. Hence according to Dwyer et al. (2003) and Jackson (1992) workforce diversity promotes complex assignments which necessitate advanced level of innovation, creative thinking and problem-solving skills.

Thus it can be concluded in assortment of studies that managers need to keenly handle and value diversity as efficient diversity management can shore up key organizational development initiatives (Liff & Wajcman, 1996; Storey, 1999). Therefore diversity mismanagement is a serious issue which has to be dealt effectively by the managers as various studies have pointed. Any sort of negligence on the matter may lead to

low morale, ambiguity, conflict and tension, confusion and problems of communication among the employees, deteriorating organizational attachment, effectiveness and workforce cohesion (Nemetz, 1996; Robbins, 2001; Chevrier, 2003). So a positive understanding of diversity can go a long way in addressing these issues.

A study done by Rubaii-Barrett & Beck (1993) among 268 local government employees in New Mexico for evaluation of differences in work climate perceptions and levels of job satisfaction amid diverse ethnic groups concluded that attitudes towards diversity were moderated by the ethnic identities of employees. Even in terms of business enhanced market share and increased sales to minority-culture groups; it was also found to be the result of having diverse workforce (Fernandez, 1991; Cox, 1993). Additionally it was also discovered that minority groups were more creative and innovative in a study done by Nemeth (1986).

Authors like Selden (1997), Page (2007), Riccucci (2002) and Pitts & Wise (2010) have assumed that diversity brings in innovative and different outlook into organizations to take care of complex organizational tasks, therefore organizations should nurture diversity. Organizations as a consequence recruit and maintain a diverse workforce, proscribe discriminatory policies and practices and provide diversity management training to employees. There are distinctive competences of the workforce and it is the task of managers to understand a wide range of behaviors to best use them for growth and survival of their organization. Therefore the review of past researches gives the platform on which the conceptual framework discussed below has been structured.

## II. Conceptual Framework

The present study assumes that independent variables of age, gender, income, marital status, education, work experience and country of origin of the employees would influence their attitude towards the organizational diversity. The review of relevant literature is the testimony to the fact that these aspects of employee demography do effect organizations as far as their attitude towards organizational/workplace diversity is concerned. Figure 1 presents the conceptual model of the study at hand.

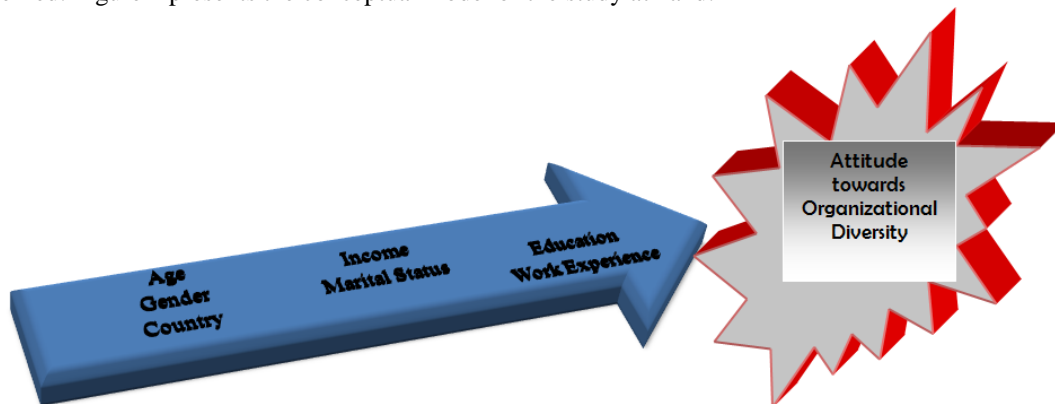


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

## III. Objectives

Following are the main aims of the present study:

1. To understand the diversity awareness level of the employees in Nigeria and India.
2. To study the attitudinal dimension of the employees in the Nigeria and India vis-à-vis organizational diversity.
3. To comparatively analyze the attitude of employees on diversity on the basis of demographic/independent variables like country, age, education, gender, marital status, income and work experience in the surveyed area.
4. To analyze the value being attached to the diversity management in Nigerian organizations and comparing it with Indian ones.
5. To have a comparative analysis on the concept of organizational diversity in Nigerian and Indian organizations.

## IV. Statement of Hypotheses

Following null hypotheses are stated based on discussion on the conceptual framework discussed above:

H<sub>0</sub>. There is no significant difference between the Nigeria and India in having employees of diverse cultures working together in organizations.

H<sub>0</sub>. There is no considerable distinction in dress code as a parameter of organizational diversity in Nigeria and India.

H<sub>0</sub> There is no significant difference in awareness level of employees vis-à-vis concept of diversity management in Nigeria and India.

H<sub>0</sub> Nigerian and Indian employees display no significant difference in their attitude concerning the onus on organizational managers to manage diversity in their organizations.

H<sub>0</sub> There is no significant difference in Nigerian and Indian companies vis-à-vis value attached to organizational diversity.

H<sub>0</sub> There is no significant difference between Nigerian and Indian organizations in terms of awareness of employees for discrimination complaints.

H<sub>0</sub> Age, Education, gender, income and marital status have no significant association vis-à-vis attitude towards workplace diversity in Nigeria and India.

H<sub>0</sub> More experienced employees in Nigeria and India do not have positive attitude towards organizational diversity.

H<sub>0</sub> Nigerian and Indian employees have no significant difference vis-à-vis attitude towards workplace diversity.

## **V. Methodology**

### **5.1. Research Design, Study Setting and Sampling**

Non-experimental, descriptive and quantitative approach was adopted for the present study. This cross sectional study design employed survey method to collect data. Two Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) manufacturing companies based in Maiduguri City of Borno State in North Eastern Nigeria were selected for this study. The first was Maiduguri Flour Mills Limited (MFML), a private joint venture owned by several shareholders including Borno State Government, Chad Basin Development Authority and Flour Mills of Nigeria Plc., holding the greater part of the shares. The major product manufactured by the company is wheat and maize flour and allied items like pasta, whole wheat, Indomie noodles, spaghetti and the like marketed under the brand name of "Golden Penny Products".

The second was a branch of PZ Cussons Plc., engaged in activities like manufacture, distribution and sale of wide range of consumer products under a range of brand names prominent among them are Zip, Tempo, Rex, Morning Fresh (Home Care), Premier, Imperial Leather, Duck, Canoe, Drum (Soaps), Robb, Medicated Dusting Powder (Medicaments) Venus, Joy (Hair Care) Nigerian Baby Care, Cussons Baby Range (Baby Care), Venus, Stella Pomade, Joy, Carex (Skin Care), Coast, Yo! Yoghourt, Refresh, Nunu, Olympic Milk, Olympic Apple Drink (Nutrition), Mamador, Devon Kings Refined Palm Olein (Palm Oil) to name a few. The unit taken up for the present study is engaged in marketing and distribution activities of the company.

Through random sampling technique of selecting every second employee from the list provided, total of 84 engaged in managerial, sales and manufacturing divisions of the two companies finally represented the total sample size of the studied organizations, after rejection and non return of 23% of the distributed questionnaires. Majority of respondents were in the age group of 25 to 35 years (56%), 57% being males and 42.9% of fairer sex. More employees at 52.4% were married as compared to 47.6 who were singles. Best part of the studied population (61.9%) were having bachelors degree as educational attainment followed by 14.3% having masters and 23.8% having various diplomas. Further, income wise majority were in the bracket of Naira 15000 to 30000 (64.3%) having 7.12 years of mean professional/work experience. Additionally the analysis of data was done through Statistical Package Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.

The Indian data constituted employees from various industries having their activities in financial, human resource management, information technology (IT) and marketing sectors. This was collected by the principal author for his related study in Indian context, which was comparatively analyzed with the Nigerian ones here; for details please refer to Abbas (2015).

### **5.2. Instrumentation, Reliability Statistics and other Statistical Tools:**

The Likert Type Scale developed for the purpose of data collection had Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of .744 for the Nigerian and .603 for the Indian instrument. It is to be noted here that both the tools had the acceptable threshold as per Nunnally & Bernstein (1994). Besides, Pearson Correlation, Pearson Chi Square Test, simple mean and percentages were employed in the research for statistical analysis.

## **VI. Findings**

### **6.1. Cultural diversity in Nigerian and Indian Organizations**

As reported by respondents, almost similar numbers from Nigeria (84.5%) and India (79.4%) have confirmed that their staff constitutes people from myriad cultures. This figure was statistically confirmed with Pearson chi square value of .895, df 1 and asymptotic significance .344 ( $p > .05$ ) which finds no significant difference between the two countries of having employees of diverse cultures working together in any organization, thereby accepting the null hypothesis on the issue.

There are many tribes and ethnicities in Nigeria but at work place usually standard dress code is followed, desired and accepted. Reflected in the present research, 81% of Nigerian employees were affirmative regarding the issue, while in contrast the Indian study revealed that in only 30.9% cases standard dress code was followed. This is a significant difference if the data of both the countries are compared {Pearson chi sq. value 52.073, df 1 and asymptotic significance at .000 ( $p < .05$ )}, thereby rejecting the null hypothesis that there is no considerable distinction in dress code as a parameter of organizational diversity in Nigeria and India.

## **6.2. Comparative Awareness Level vis-à-vis Diversity Management**

The Nigerian employees were almost in equal numbers aware (52.4%) and unaware (47.6%) with the notion of Diversity Management. Whereas in case of India the percentage of employees who were familiar were on a much higher side (85.3%) as compared to those who were not familiar (14.7%). This was further substantiated with high significance level of .000, Pearson chi-square value 28.360, df 1 evaluated from the data available from these two countries. Therefore null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in awareness level of employees vis-à-vis concept of diversity management in Nigeria and India is rejected.

## **6.3. Role of Managers in Handling Organizational Diversity and Value Attached**

Majority of Nigerian employees at 77.4% feel that it is obligation of the managers in the organizations for managing diversity, on the other hand Indian respondents were almost equally divided on the issue with 52.9% saying yes, while 47.1% saying no. A highly significant difference between the respondents of the two countries was reported with Pearson Chi square value of 13.202, df 1 and asymptotic significance .000 ( $p < .05$ ). The null hypothesis that Nigerian and Indian employees display no significant difference in their attitude concerning the onus on organizational managers to manage diversity in their organizations stands rejected.

Large majority of Nigerian and Indian employees (84.5% and 87.5% respectively) feel that diversity is valued and cultivated in their work place. The finding was corroborated with the statistical measure Pearson Chi square value of .391, df 1 and asymptotic significance .532 ( $p > .05$ ). Thus the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in Nigerian and Indian companies vis-à-vis value attached to organizational diversity is accepted.

## **6.4. Awareness of Discrimination Complaints Procedures**

Nigerian employees were more aware of discrimination complaints procedures at 75% as compared to their Indian counterparts (53.7% at majority had no knowledge). The finding is reflected with significance level of .000 ( $p < .05$ ), Pearson chi square value of 17.450, df 1, showing significant difference in their awareness levels. The null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between Nigerian and Indian organizations in terms of awareness of employees for discrimination complaints is rejected.

## **6.5. Attitudinal Dimensions of Organizational Diversity**

### **6.5.1. Affect of Age and Education**

The Nigerian employees were found to be having no significant correlation between age and attitude towards organizational diversity with Pearson Correlation value  $r = .110$ ,  $p > 0.05$  (.319). In contrast the Indian data with significance level .021 ( $r = -.091$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) had a negative correlation with age, thereby implying that employees who were of advanced age approved less of diversity as compared to their younger counterparts. The null hypothesis that age has no significant relationship vis-à-vis attitude towards workplace diversity was accepted for Nigerian and rejected for Indian employees.

With significance level of .011 ( $r = -.075$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), the more educated Indian employees showed less favorable attitude towards organizational diversity, nonetheless the Nigerian respondents showed no such significant association ( $p = .415$ ) between education and their attitude ( $r = -.090$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Thus null hypothesis that education of employees has no significant association for attitude towards workplace diversity is accepted for Nigeria and rejected for India.

### **6.5.2. Elements of Income and Work Experience**

Higher income Nigerians displayed positive attitude towards organizational diversity with significance level .046 ( $r = .196$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) while in sharp contrast Indian employees had negative correlation with  $r = -.111$ ,  $p < 0.05$  (significance level .000). This implies that as Indian employees are richer, they don't like diversity in their organizations. Null hypothesis that there is a no significant difference among employees with different income group vis-à-vis workplace diversity in Nigeria and India is rejected.

Further analysis shows that Nigerian employees had positive correlation vis-à-vis their attitude towards organizational diversity as their professional experience increased with significance level of .003 ( $r = .323$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). More experienced Indian employees on the other hand were downbeat towards organizational

diversity as compared to those who were having less experience with  $r = -.149$ , significance level  $.002$  ( $p < .05$ ). Thus null hypothesis that more experienced employees in Nigeria and India do not have positive attitude towards organizational diversity is rejected for Nigerian data and accepted for the Indian one.

### **6.5.3. Affect of Gender, Marital Status and Country**

There was no affect of the independent variable gender in Nigerian {significance level of  $.377$  ( $p > .05$ ), Pearson chi-square value of  $3.096$ ,  $df$  3} as well as Indian employees with asymptotic significance  $.430$  chi-square value of  $1.689$ ,  $df$  2 as far as attitude towards organizational diversity is concerned. Thus being male or female worker in any of the above countries mentioned does not have influence on their views of diversity. Thus null hypothesis for the affect of gender on attitude of employees towards organizational diversity is accepted for both Nigeria and India.

Pearson chi square value of  $8.510$ ,  $df$  3 and asymptotic significance  $.037$  ( $p < .05$ ) displayed significance difference between married (were more positive) and single Nigerian employees vis-à-vis their attitude towards organization diversity. Nevertheless no such association was found in the Indian data ( $p$ - value  $.414$ , Pearson chi-square value of  $1.766$  with  $df$  2). Thus null hypothesis exploring the affect of marital status on attitude of employees towards organizational diversity is rejected for Nigeria and accepted for India.

Mean score of  $3.32$  -as against  $2.05$  -for Nigerian employees means more positive attitude towards diversity as compared to their Indian counterparts. The  $p$ - value  $.000$ , Pearson chi-square value of  $1.683$  with  $df$  4 additionally points to the fact that there was statistically noteworthy divergence between Nigerian and Indian employees for their attitude. The null hypothesis that Nigerian and Indian employees have no significant difference vis-à-vis attitude towards workplace diversity is rejected.

## **VII. Conclusion and Implication**

The research at hand tried to bring forward salient features of the comparative study between Nigerian and Indian employees in private sector vis-à-vis their attitude towards organizational diversity. The industries included in the study were FMCG, IT and those in financial sector with employees engaged in marketing, sales, manufacturing, human resource management and related activities. Nigeria and India, it is to be noted are very diverse countries comprising workforce from different walks of life, speaking many languages, having different dresses, culture, festivals, religion, tribes or castes systems (in India only). All these assorted variables affect the way employees from these two countries conduct themselves at work.

Many interesting findings emerged from the research, for instance the typical dress code pattern is followed more in Nigerian context as compared to India, where different dressing is better received at offices. This is corroborated by another finding which says that the Indian employees surveyed were comparative more aware of the notion of diversity management as compared to their Nigerian counterparts. Further exploring, as the Indians were more conscious of diversity and its management, they -compared to Nigerian employees- do not put the onus of diversity management solely to their supervisors or managers rather they consider themselves also to be responsible for the same. Nonetheless almost equivalent numbers of employees in both the countries perceive that diversity is nurtured, promoted and cherished in their respective organizations. Coming to its applied part, it was found that as compared to Indian workers, Nigerians were more aware of discrimination complaints procedures in their organizations.

Another finding was that among the older, better educated and higher income Indian employees, there was negative approval of people from diverse background, but Nigerian showed no such attitude except higher income Nigerians who had positive attitude towards diversity. Thus on these dimension there was worthwhile difference in attitude of employees of these two countries. The more the work experience Nigerian employees had, they were having positive outlook of diversity, but opposite was true for Indians. Gender had no role to play as far as their view on organizational diversity is concerned for respondents of both the countries. However married Nigerian employees were affirmative to the concept of diversity as compared to their single counterparts, additionally no such association was found among Indians. Overall the study revealed that as compared to Indian employees, Nigerians were more accommodating to diversity in their organizations.

Therefore with this comparative study, the managers can better understand various issues related to organizational diversity, especially so in a globalized environment. It also can be a guide to those employees who do not value diversity, that it is their own responsibility to understand the virtue of having their coworkers from different backgrounds working in tandem with them for common good and achievement of organizational goals.

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