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Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as Strategic Imperatives in Organisational Transformation: A Critical Review of Literature

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Abstract
This study examined how diversity, equitable organisational systems, inclusive participation, and leadership accountability contribute to organisational transformation. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) have emerged as key strategic imperatives that propel long-term performance and sustainable organisational transformation. Yet, many institutions struggle to translate DEI commitments into sustained, measurable outcomes. The study was anchored in Social Identity Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory. The study used a critical literature review approach that comprehensively synthesised relevant theoretical and empirical literature. Findings showed that when DEI is embedded in organisational strategy, governance, leadership, and culture, it facilitates organisational transformation. Key enablers of meaningful change included inclusive leadership, equitable decision-making, employee belonging, and institutional accountability. However, unconscious bias, in-group favouritism, structural discrimination, resistance to change, and symbolic implementation hinder DEI effectiveness. The study also found that workforce diversity, without institutional change, does not necessarily lead to inclusion or lasting change. It concludes that sustainable transformation must be a comprehensive, leadership-driven process, and that institutionalising DEI, embedding it into organisational structures, practices and culture, is essential. To create meaningful, lasting institutional transformation, organisations need to reinforce accountability, encourage inclusive involvement, assess DEI outcomes, and ensure inclusion strategies connect to longer-term organisational goals. The study has implications for policymakers seeking to promote inclusive, transformative organisational cultures that support SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

Key terms: Diversity, equity, inclusion, leadership effectiveness, organisational transformation.

INTRODUCTION

This study examined how diversity, equitable organisational systems, inclusive participation, and leadership accountability contribute to organisational transformation. Factors driving organisational transformation include rapid advances in technology, demographic diversification, hybrid work, globalisation, increased public responsibility, and growing employee expectations for fairness. Despite most organisations investing in diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, unequal access to opportunities and exclusion persists. Therefore, DEI is a strategic concern for all organisations, and an organisation's membership should reflect the demographics of the broader population (Golden, 2024). According to Kiradoo (2022), workplace diversity occurs when employers include people with different backgrounds, viewpoints, skills, and characteristics in an organisation. Equity, on the other hand, refers to ensuring fairness and justice in organisational policies, practices, and opportunities by identifying and addressing systemic obstacles, historical disadvantages, and individual disparities (Wolbring & Nguyen, 2023). Inclusion reflects how individuals feel included (belonging), influential (power), and able to have their voices heard (voice) within an organisation (Ayoko & Fujimoto, 2024). A workplace may be formally equitable (equal opportunity) but not inclusive (inclusive practice), and formally inclusive (inclusive practice) but not diverse (inclusive culture) and formally inclusive (inclusive practice) but with informal arrangements to encourage sameness (sameness culture) (Park et al., 2023; Causadias et al., 2023).

Inclusion has been linked with positive results such as commitment, well-being, voice, and performance, though these outcomes are influenced by the environment, systems, and leadership that enable people to be present and participate in the organisation (Randel, 2025; Zhao et al., 2025). A key finding of this study was that DEI can only be transformative when it is integrated into the organisation's strategy. According to Scott (2022), economically and socially excluded groups suffer negative effects on their mental health, work attitude, and job satisfaction, which eventually lowers employee retention rates and makes the firm less competitive in the market.

This study was motivated by the fact that, despite the world becoming a global village and organisations attracting workers globally, DEI has remained a HR compliance exercise rather than being integrated into strategy and measured through outcomes. Previous studies have examined the three constructs separately and their influence on employee satisfaction or performance, with little attention to organisational transformation outcomes such as cultural change and leadership effectiveness. Therefore, the study aimed to determine whether DEI is a strategic driver of organisational transformation rather than merely a stand-alone HR programme (Shaikh et al., 2025).

According to Onyeador et al. (2021), consistent organisational approaches to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives drive transformation for every employee in the organisation. DEI is currently recognised as a central driver of innovation, competitive advantage, and financial performance. For DEI to be impactful, organisations need to move beyond simple representation to address systemic barriers, unconscious bias, and the complexities of fostering genuine inclusion and belonging (Shaikh et al., 2025).

Yet, limited academic understanding of DEI synergy often leads to a disjointed focus on diversity or inclusion as separate issues and prevents many organisations from making impactful, enduring progress. This often results in patchwork solutions that fail to integrate effectively into an organisation's strategy. A scholarly synthesis is needed to help leaders, policymakers, and Human Resource practitioners shift from a reactive approach to a proactive, strategic one. DEI can have real impact only when it is integrated into organisational strategy, culture, and leadership models, not just treated as a program (Shaikh et al., 2025).

These findings indicate that diversity, equity, and inclusion should not be treated as isolated organisational initiatives. Instead, sustainable transformation requires integrating them simultaneously into organisational structures, practices, and culture. Collectively, these studies suggest that DEI's transformative potential is realised when organisations move beyond numerical representation and create structures that promote

meaningful participation, fairness, and belonging. This study addresses a knowledge gap: diversity, equity, inclusion, and leadership are often treated as separate interventions rather than interacting mechanisms of organisational transformation. Existing reviews highlight specific constructs or assess intervention outcomes. Still, the literature considered in this study does not fully explain the joint conditions under which social identity boundaries are disrupted, formal rules are redesigned, and leaders sustain behavioural change (Park et al., 2023; Zhao et al., 2025). This study synthesises convergent and conflicting evidence and distinguishes context-dependent outcomes from claims of universal effectiveness.

This study conducted a critical literature review to establish how DEI approaches affect organisational transformation and what conditions are necessary for them to become the basis for enduring, rather than symbolic, change. The study draws on Social Identity Theory to understand the significance of group membership, in-group favouritism, and belonging in the context of organisational life. Transformational Leadership Theory is used to understand how leaders create vision, courage, and responsibility for change (Cao & Le, 2024; Holck, 2024; Randel, 2025). Organisations must establish an inclusive culture that recognises and values individual differences, promotes fairness and respect, and provides equal opportunities for all employees. (Kiradoo, 2022). Achieving and maintaining a diverse workforce is challenging. Many organisations struggle to establish a DEI culture, and even those that succeed may find it challenging to sustain their gains over time. Creating a DEI culture requires the commitment of the organisation's leadership.

Thus, the study is organised as follows: Chapter Two presents the theoretical framework and literature review; Chapter Three covers the methodology; Chapter Four presents the findings and discussion; Chapter Five outlines implications for practice and limitations; and Chapter Six presents the conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (SIT) explains how intergroup relations shape people's relationships and perceptions in organisational settings. The theory was advanced by Tajfel (1979) and later extended by Tajfel and Turner (1979), proposing that people relate as representatives of a group to which they draw their self-concept, creating distinctive categories. These categories relate to social identities such as gender, age, ethnicity, and disability. Researchers have applied the theory in DEI studies to show how organisational experiences shape DEI.

SIT states that individuals establish identities through social groupings and that such identifications defend and enhance self-identity. Creating group identities requires categorising one's "in-group" relative to an "out-group" and viewing one's own group positively vis-à-vis the out-group (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

SIT contends that a person's self-concept is partly derived from group membership, which affects categorisation, belonging, in-group preference, and out-group judgment. Holck (2024) argues that Social Identity Theory helps explain team formation, inclusion, exclusion, and identity-based workplace dynamics. Because organisations rarely maintain exclusion solely through overt animosity, the notion is useful. Additionally, it can be replicated through unspoken sponsorship, culturally limited conceptions of professionalism, comfort with similarities, and unspoken presumptions about leadership capacity.

The Theory explains why representation is insufficient in the DEI framework. Employees from underrepresented groups may be present but still feel pressure to fit in when majority standards dictate what constitutes competence, confidence, leadership, or cultural fit. According to Tajfel, when individuals draw clear "us and them" lines, these boundaries shape how people perceive one another. People perceive group similarities (i.e., "we're all much the same") and group differences (i.e., "we're different from them") more when category distinctions are prominent (Tajfel & Wilkes, 1963). According to Randel (2025), workplace inclusion is especially important because it views

belonging as part of the social structure that determines whether it is safe and beneficial to participate fully.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory was developed by Burns (1978) and later enhanced by Bass (1985). According to Krishnan (2005), the central tenet of transformational leadership theory is the leader's ability to inspire followers to achieve more than they anticipated. Bass (1985) argues that transformational leadership has four components, namely: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. Further, Krishnan (2002) identified transformational leadership as a relationship in which the leader and follower motivate each other to higher levels, resulting in value-system congruence between the leader and follower and affecting follower satisfaction and commitment to the organisation.

Bass (1990) further argued that transformational leadership produces employees who are unselfish, faithful, and connected to the organisation. These employees often go beyond what is expected in their job descriptions. Research shows that an organisation's leadership style strongly influences its culture. In a transformational culture, employees generally feel a sense of purpose and family, as transformational leaders help subordinates increase their commitment to the organisation (Tucker & Russell, 2004).

Applying SIT and transformational leadership theory offers a useful explanation of the different, interconnected components of leadership and organisational practices (Asford & Maael, 1985). Transformational leaders communicate a compelling vision, recognise differences, and promote a sense of shared purpose. These leadership practices support employee identification with an organisation, showing that diversity is valued within groups. SIT, by contrast, describes how employees respond to visionary leadership.

DEI and Organisational Transformation

Organisational transformation should focus on bigger change than routine improvements. It entails changes in presumptions, decision-making guidelines, leadership standards, resource distribution, and participation patterns. Consequently, DEI should not be seen as a set of individual programmes, but as a transformative capacity. Recent studies suggest that DEI interventions without clear goals, leadership, systems, and context may produce mixed outcomes (Zhao et al., 2025). Therefore, the question is not whether an organisation has DEI initiatives; it is whether those initiatives change how the business learns, hires, promotes, listens, rewards, and handles unfairness.

Diversity and inclusiveness in leadership are linked to better organisational outcomes, according to industry studies. However, DEI is not just about financial performance; according to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2024), organisations that contribute to decent employment, reduced inequality, gender equality, and stronger institutions are particularly crucial because progress on the SDGs remains unequal. In this way, DEI-led change contributes to broader social sustainability as well as an internal organisational purpose.

For organisations to endure, prosper, and realise their full potential, DEI must be addressed. Melissa et al. (2022) argue that clear metrics on employees' sense of belonging, engagement, and promotion rates can drive accountability among leaders. Lewis et al. (2025) further contend that adopting DEI principles in the workplace is crucial because it does more than promote social fairness. Instead, DEI principles strengthen corporate cultures, increase each member's potential contribution, and improve organisational effectiveness.

Further, DEI enables businesses to establish rules and moral guidelines that support programs that allow workers to make choices. DEI emphasises cohesion, responsibility, and fair opportunity for every worker in the organisation (Robinson, 2024). For DEI to transform organisations, it must reach work design, decision architecture, leadership expectations, and accountability systems. Equity matters because it increases productivity, employee satisfaction, and profitability by fostering a positive work environment that values respect, trust, and teamwork, and promotes diversity and inclusion.

Transformational and Inclusive Leadership

Transformational leaders motivate people to join a shared mission and embrace change, adding to the social identity lens. New empirical studies show that transformational leadership (Cao and Le, 2024) is the mechanism by which organisational change potential is linked to confidence in leadership. This matters for DEI because transformation often challenges the status quo, practices, and assumptions about merit. If workers don't believe that leaders will act consistently, equitably, and openly, they are unlikely to support significant change.

The behaviours necessary for DEI transformation are further specified by recent inclusive leadership research. To foster an environment where workers can contribute without concealing their identities or points of view, inclusive leaders embrace diversity, encourage voice, and maintain accessibility. Roberson and Perry (2022) show that inclusive leadership requires both thought and action; leaders must make sense of inclusion and translate that sensemaking into everyday behaviours. Ashikali et al. (2021) contend that inclusive leadership supports inclusive climates in diverse public-sector teams. Li and Tang (2022) show that inclusive leadership fosters creative performance at the team level by providing psychological safety. These results support the study's main thesis: leaders who turn values into lived routines are necessary to transform DEI initiatives.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a critical literature review research design, which was used to analyse the relationship between diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI) and organisation transformation. This design was suitable because it allowed thorough analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of established theoretical and empirical research, and enabled recognition of conceptual inconsistencies, methodological limitations, contradictory findings, and gaps in existing research. As Snyder (2019) notes, literature reviews offer a valuable methodological framework for synthesising current knowledge, identifying gaps in the literature, and further developing theory. In the same way, the critical reviews are defined by Grant and Booth (2009) as techniques that include comprehensive examination and conceptual analysis of the literature and may lead to new interpretations and theories.

The study was informed by peer-reviewed journal articles, important theoretical papers and empirical research on diversity, equity, inclusion, organisational change and organisational transformation. The literature was chosen because it was theoretically relevant, empirically informative, scholarly and offered different viewpoints on the link between DEI practices and organisational transformation. Studies focusing on inclusive leadership, organisational culture, equity in institutional practices, employee participation, structural inequalities and organisational change processes were particularly considered. To ensure a balanced, comprehensive critical analysis, the study considered both supporting and contrasting scholarly views.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

DEI Strengthens Decision-Making, Learning, and Innovation When Inclusion Is Present

The study's first significant finding was that when organisations foster real engagement, diversity drives change. Diversity expands an organisation's options for knowledge, lived experience, interpretation, and problem framing. However, diverse information enhances decision-making only when individuals can express their opinions, disagree, question assumptions, and influence outcomes. Therefore, inclusive leadership should turn diversity into a teaching tool. Li and Tang (2022) show that inclusive leadership fosters innovative performance through psychological safety at both the individual and team levels, establishing inclusion as a prerequisite for knowledge exchange and innovation rather than merely being good to others.

Because organisational transformation requires organisations to recognise what their current patterns conceal, this finding is especially pertinent to that process. Familiar interpretations of consumers, workers, markets, technology, and hazards may be replicated by homogeneous teams. When members are not punished for raising uncomfortable material, inclusive teams can better uncover blind spots. Therefore, rather than using employees as symbols of demographic categories, DEI improves transformation by increasing organisational intelligence.

Diversity, however, can lead to conflict when groups cannot incorporate new members. Liu et al. (2023) highlight the importance of inclusive Human Resource Management (HRM) and learning-oriented behaviours in mitigating negative consequences such as interpersonal conflict, and characterise workforce diversity as a potentially double-edged sword. This makes the case for strategic DEI management stronger, not weaker. Businesses shouldn't presume that diversity will inevitably lead to creativity. They must create the environment, leadership styles, and educational practices that make diversity fruitful. Stronger employee engagement and retention, increased creativity, and better problem-solving skills are among the benefits of a good DEI strategy, according to Shaikh et al. (2025). However, they also found that organisations struggle to overcome systemic challenges, unconscious bias, and the difficulty of building an inclusive, belonging place.

Equity Systems Convert DEI Values into Organisational Routines

The second finding was that equity links practice and commitment. While many companies claim to encourage diversity and inclusion, important processes remain unaltered. Achieving equity requires structured attention to hiring, selection, compensation, advancement, task distribution, flexible work schedules, grievance resolution, and development opportunities. Without system redesign, DEI continues to rely on individual managers' goodwill, resulting in uneven employee experiences.

Zhao et al. (2025) discovered that the quality and strength of the evidence supporting various D&I strategies varies. Recruitment, leave, and compensation policies yield mixed results; however, diversity training is often associated with awareness and learning outcomes. Organisations often over-rely on training as evidence of action, but training alone cannot replace pay-equity analysis, accountable sponsorship, transparent promotion standards, organised hiring rubrics, and accessible accommodations. Therefore, behavioural learning and system redesign are combined in a transformative DEI strategy.

Data is also necessary for equity, but it must be used appropriately. Disaggregated workforce data can identify areas of concentrated inequality, such as unequal access to high-profile projects or lower advancement rates for specific groups. However, collecting data without action can undermine confidence. Workers must understand the purpose of data collection, how privacy is protected, and how results will drive change. Therefore, rather than being viewed as a reporting exercise, equity measures should be linked to governance, responsibility, and employee voice.

Inclusion and Belonging Influence Engagement, Voice, and Retention

Including workers affects whether they feel their work is valued, which is important for engagement and retention. Staff should be encouraged to feel like a part of a group, to be different, but not feel forced to be different. Randel (2025) argues that inclusion operates at both a psychological and structural level and links to performance, well-being, and organisational commitment. Change increases uncertainty, and belonging becomes more critical in a changing environment. If workers believe they will be listened to and treated fairly, they will be more open to change. On the other hand, demotivated employees may be less engaged and suffer from low morale; when minds are blocked, these become hidden transformation costs for organisations.

Leadership signals are also interpreted by employees in the context of inclusive environments. If bias in hiring or leadership promotions goes unaddressed, it is seen as performative promises and a lack of discussion about discrimination. Evidence for this comes from Ashikali et al. (2021), who show that inclusive leadership creates an inclusive environment because workers judge DEI through daily patterns of behaviour, not just words. Therefore, inclusion is an environment that is created through repeated decisions, conversations and results.

Leadership Accountability Determines Whether DEI Becomes Transformational

Leaders should provide resources, confront unfair conventions, model inclusive behaviour, and take responsibility for results if they want organisations to transform truly. According to Roberson and Perry (2022), inclusive leadership involves both the practical work of implementing inclusion and the cognitive task

of understanding it. This implies that leaders need to understand how their actions affect inclusiveness, not just support DEI. Cao and Le (2024) show that trust in leadership shapes the impact of transformational leadership on organisational change potential. DEI change often requires leaders to ask difficult questions: When making decisions, who is absent? Who has a valid leadership style? Which policies seem impartial but lead to unfair results? These questions are likely to trigger defensiveness when trust is low.

Performance management, board supervision, succession planning, and strategic review should all incorporate leadership responsibility. Appointing a DEI officer while ignoring the rest of the leadership structure is insufficient. Boards, teams, HR professionals, executives, and line managers must all own DEI. Otherwise, it stops being an organisational transformation goal and becomes a specialist agenda. Hhundekari (2024) argues that inclusive leadership behaviours such as openness, accessibility, and empowerment are essential to creating an inclusive environment that turns demographic diversity into improved team performance. To lay the foundation for meaningful change, organisational change leaders must critically analyse and reflect deeply on organisational culture (Sequetta, 2023).

Barriers to DEI-Led Transformation

Five significant obstacles are identified by the review. The first is unconscious prejudice, particularly when decisions are unclear and based on subjective standards. Bias can affect hiring, performance evaluations, promotions, task distribution, and perceptions of potential. The second obstacle is in-group favouritism. Even when they don't mean to exclude others, people often trust and unofficially support individuals they feel familiar with (Holck, 2024).

Performativity is the third obstacle. When corporations utilise inclusive rhetoric and branding without altering power, policy, or practice, DEI becomes performative. Employees become cynical because of the discrepancy between their internal and external experiences. The fourth obstacle is weak evidence use, and according to Zhao et al. (2025), the evidence base for various treatments differs; thus, organisations should avoid replicating popular programs without considering their suitability for the issue at hand.

Opposition to change is the fifth obstacle. Beyond overt opposition, resistance can also take the form of budget cuts, data avoidance, silence, delays, or accusations that DEI detracts from performance. In a recent discussion of DEI in professional sectors, several organisations are renaming or scaling back their visible DEI commitments under pressure, even as inclusiveness issues persist (de Souza Santos et al., 2025). Therefore, executives must treat DEI as a core organisational capability, not a public relations initiative.

Implications for Practice

To achieve sustainable transformation, the study finds that organisations must embed Diversity, Equity and Inclusion into their strategies, leadership practices, policies, and culture. Leadership should encourage inclusive leadership, equal decision-making, and employee contribution and commitment. HR professionals need to ensure recruitment and promotion, performance management, and employee development are carried out fairly. Organisations also need systems to track and respond to DEI efforts, resistance to change, and unconscious bias. DEI is ultimately a process that is ongoing and strategic, not a symbolic or compliance-driven effort to create meaningful inclusion, organisational effectiveness, and sustainable transformation.

DEI must be part of Strategy and should link initiatives across all organisational departments, such as procurement, workforce planning, innovation, risk, customer knowledge, and leadership development. DEI must be integrated strategically, not as another annual training cycle or public relations exercise. Leaders should shift from awareness-only interventions to system reforms. Mechanisms that help operationalise equity include clear promotion criteria, fair task distribution, adjusted performance evaluations, accessible job design, sponsorship, and structured interviews. As Zhao et al. (2025) show, organisations should tailor interventions to specific outcomes and assess them objectively, since intervention impact depends on context.

Further, organisations should build inclusive leadership as a core leadership competency. The aim of training leaders to be inclusive is not to make them courteous, but to equip them to hear criticism, give voice, recognise the signs of exclusion, and change patterns. Li and Tang (2022) show that psychological safety fosters creativity in inclusive leadership, and Roberson and Perry (2022) argue that inclusive leadership requires sensemaking and enacted practice. Therefore, introspection, behaviour and accountability should be a part of leadership development. Finally, Organisations should not let resistance dominate the agenda, but treat it as a normal part of the change process. Some resistance may result from miscommunication and can be resolved through discussion. Leaders need to show that fairness is not about giving preferential treatment but about removing unfair barriers to assessing merit.

Limitations of the Study

The critical literature review approach relied on the existing theoretical and empirical literature. While this ensured that key assumptions, theoretical frameworks, and empirical evidence could be explored in depth, it was not used to test the relationships between DEI practices and organisational transformation empirically. Future studies should test the conceptual arguments raised in this review using quantitative, qualitative, and/or mixed-methods approaches to investigate the effect of DEI practices on organisational transformation empirically. Future research should examine how DEI transformation varies by sector, nation, organisation size, and legislation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: The study concludes that DEI can be a true catalyst for sustainable organisational change only when it is embedded in organisational structure, consistently modelled by leaders, supported by equitable structures and practices, and reinforced by an inclusive organisational culture. The study highlights the importance of organisations shifting away from numerical diversity goals toward a more holistic approach that promotes equitable access to opportunities, engages employees, fosters transparent decision-making, and builds inclusive leadership. To drive lasting institutional and cultural change, organisational leaders and policymakers should have clear accountability structures and regularly review DEI efforts.

The study advances knowledge in the field by presenting DEI as a holistic strategic organisational capability, rather than a series of separate diversity projects. It highlights the interdependency of diversity, equity, and inclusion and explains that real organisational change happens when DEDI is integrated into the organisation's culture, practices, policies, leadership, and governance. Structural discrimination, unconscious bias, in-group favouritism, resistance to change, and inconsistencies between formal organisational policies and actual workplace practices remain major obstacles to sustainable change. Thus, the study underscores the need for context-sensitive interventions that target both individual behaviours and institutional structures to achieve the best DEI outcomes.

The study concludes that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are strategic imperatives that must be addressed to achieve sustainable organisational change. The critical literature review found that DEI's impact extends beyond workforce representation and adherence to diversity policies to include structural, leadership, institutional policy, decision-making, and organisational culture. The review also found that having a DEI initiative in place does not necessarily mean there is an actual shift in the organisation. They can be effective to varying degrees, depending on how well the organisation embeds inclusive practices, tackles structural inequalities, and demonstrates long-term leadership in equity and inclusion.

Moreover, DEI should not be a side project; rather, it is a strategic requirement for organisational development. Diversity can enhance decision-making, creativity, legitimacy, and resilience, according to the data synthesised in this paper, but only if it is combined with inclusive settings, fair procedures, and responsible leadership. DEI may become resistant, fragmented, or symbolic if these conditions are not met. Social identity theory shows that exclusion can happen even in organisations that seem to value justice. Inclusive and transformational leaders can cultivate the trust, accountability, and voice needed for change. For organisations seeking social responsibility and sustainable performance, the

challenge is not to appear diverse but to become genuinely fair, inclusive, adaptive, and accountable. Further study is needed to understand how digital collaboration, algorithmic hiring, hybrid employment, and artificial intelligence affect inclusion and equity.

Recommendations: The study recommends that organisations should take a holistic, strategic approach to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) to drive long-term organisational change. DEI should not be seen as a standalone HR initiative or a compliance measure, but rather as an integral part of organisational strategies, structures, leadership practices, and culture. This integration would help turn diversity into meaningful participation, opportunities, and institutional change. DEI should be incorporated into the organisation's strategic planning and decision-making processes. Organisations should set clear DEI goals, invest in the necessary resources, and build accountability systems to track progress. DEI practices should be embedded in recruitment, promotion, performance management, employee development, and succession planning to reduce structural inequities and promote fairness across the organisation.

Additionally, organisations need to reinforce transformational and inclusive leadership practices to drive cultural and behavioural change. Leaders should model fairness, involve employees in challenging unfairness, confront discrimination, and foster respect, value, and empowerment among employees. Organisations should foster inclusive cultures that support employee belonging, voice, and psychological safety. To make organisations more conducive to DEI, policymakers and regulatory institutions should create supportive frameworks that foster transparency, equal opportunity, and non-discrimination.

Ultimately, future research should examine the long-term effects of DEI initiatives on organisational transformation using longitudinal and mixed-methods research designs. Organisations should audit hiring, compensation, promotion, and developmental opportunities for inequities to ensure DEI. They should also establish clear decision criteria and reporting processes for executives and line managers; assess belonging and voice alongside advancement and retention; hold executives and line managers accountable for clearly defined outcomes; and use process evaluations over time to monitor differential and unintended effects.

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