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Senior Managers' Perception of Inclusion Management Policy Implementation

Regina Lassey
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Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Regina Fidelia Adwo Lassey

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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

Senior Managers' Perception of Inclusion Management Policy Implementation

by

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MPHIL, Walden University, 2019

MBA, Walden University, 2016

BSC, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, 2010

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

Walden University

October 2024

Abstract

The lack of inclusiveness is a problem in managing diversity in today's workforce. Senior managers are charged with demonstrating leadership commitment to managing diversity and inclusion in the workplace as inclusion concepts go beyond diversity management. The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of 17 senior managers in the New York transportation industry in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies in the New York transportation industry. The study was grounded in transformational leadership theory. Senior managers' lived experiences revealed in semi structured interviews that while diversity initiatives are widely adopted, achieving true inclusiveness requires more than a diverse workforce. Data were analyzed using systematic coding for 11 themes. Findings suggested that effective inclusion necessitates leaders modeling inclusive behaviors and integrating inclusion into organizational practices. Inclusiveness fosters an environment where all employees feel genuinely valued and integrated beyond mere demographic representation. Senior managers who actively display their commitment to inclusivity increase employee engagement and satisfaction. A key recommendation for organizations is that inclusion should be incorporated into the organizational culture rather than treated as a standalone initiative. Organizations should implement ongoing employee engagement and feedback mechanisms to ensure that inclusion programs remain relevant and effective. This study has positive social change implications as it created awareness and introduced organizations to the realities surrounding diversity management and how inclusive policies and strategies directly reflect employee productivity.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to God Almighty, the author and finisher of All things, without his blessings and grace I could not have pulled through. I also dedicate this to my parents W.O 1 Stephen Lacey Retired and Comfort Hanson for their unwavering support, advice and guidance, I could not have done this without you both. I dedicate this study to my daughter Eden, although so young you have been an inspiration for me not giving up on my dreams and to set an example that you are equally capable of achieving your dreams regardless of any prevailing hurdles.

Finally, I dedicate this study to me, the journey to achieving this dream has been a gruesome yet fulfilling experience. I have been through some of the emotional turmoil's that life could ever throw at me. Yet, I persevered, I fought, I ran, I fell, I crawled and stood up again and made it to the finish line. Indeed, I can do All things though Christ who strengthens me.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

There has been a surge in diversity and inclusion management concerns and initiatives which transcend social and political borders across nations in the last few decades. Workplace diversity practices have become important for business growth as demographics have shifted in today's workforce (Mousa et al, 2021). According to Carstens and De Kock (2017), in increasing workforce diversity companies are faced with underlying concern on balancing the increasing levels of diversity to maintain increased business performance. The United States Census Bureau (2016) predicted that by the 2050s ethnic minority groups such as African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians will comprise 50% of the population in United States. The problem of managing diverse workforce stems from the incapacity of managers to fully understand the dynamics of inclusion management while dissociating themselves from prejudice vantage points, and manage the benefits of workforce diversity (Mor Barak, 2016). Ferdman (2020) acknowledged that employees today are more receptive to collaborating with coworkers from diverse backgrounds. Nonetheless, research has not kept pace with the implementation of inclusion management policies with increasing levels of workplace diversity (Rosso, 2021).

The subject of my research was inclusion management as current quantitative studies on diversity and inclusion do not reflect on the assessment of inclusion on the outcome of job performance (see Mousa, 2021). There have been other studies on diversity and diversity management which did not involve understanding inclusiveness in the implementation of relevant business performance tools. Embarking on a

hermeneutical phenomenological study is important to understand the perception and lived experiences of inclusion management programs and policies of senior managers. This study was designed to look back on the inception of diversity and inclusion to explore whether it is recognized by senior managers as a crucial tool for managing inclusion for sustainable workforce and organizational growth policy implementation.

In Chapter 1, I provide a summary of research on inclusion management by identifying the gap in knowledge and scholarly contributions on the topic of inclusion management. I state the problem statement, clarify the purpose statement of the study, identify the research question and explain the conceptual framework of the study. I also explain the nature of the study, define the terms related to the study, describe my assumptions for the study, explain the scope and delimitation of the study, identify the limitations of the study, and demonstrate potential significance of the study.

Background of the Study

The study of inclusion management is crucial in today's diverse workforce. Organizations are faced with major inclusion management concerns in diversity management across sectors (Choi, 2017). Baum (2021) defined diversity and inclusion as valuing each uniqueness individuals brings to a team and sharing potential while respecting differences enriched with synergizing collective talents, perspectives, and experiences in organizations. The concept of current diversity management efforts puts inclusion management concepts as the focal point for many researchers to promote inclusion in the workplace (Mousa, 2021). Averting inclusion backlash begins with instituting diversity efforts to maximize benefits across group lines, social issues, and

policy review (Brannon et al., 2018). However, unconscious bias exhibited by dominant groups impedes diversification of staff (Javier et. al., 2022).

Diversity and multiculturalism in the workforce have become a reality for organizations in the face of globalization in the past two years (Jain & Pareek, 2020). According to Mousa et al, (2021), studies have shown that diversity management alone is inadequate to have an impact on enhancing employee performance. Therefore, it puts organizations at a disadvantage in balancing goals against increasing diversity in their workforce with less emphasis on inclusion management (Akpapuna et al., 2020). Research from the U.S. Census Bureau indicated by the year 2025, 42% of the United States population will comprise of racial and ethical minority groups and will increase diversity in the workplace (Brimhall et al., 2017). Organizations need to embark on the creation of inclusive workplaces to accommodate the increase in workforce diversity (Smith & Angood, 2020).

Existing literature on inclusion management stems from decades of research on the cultural, social, psychological, and political influence of managing the various aspects of diversity (Guillaume et al., 2013; Martin et al., 2022). Ohunakin et al., (2019) showed a broad demographic of diversity, firm performance, and strategic change to a test of moderation on how diversity management and inclusion affected organizational outcomes. Researchers also stressed whether diversity and inclusion are enough in organizations today (Sabharwal et al, 2019). Wheeler (2010) highlighted the emergence of business strategy through diversity and inclusion. Martin et al., (2022) provided information on the role played by diversity and inclusion in today's business economy.

Kotter (2009) and Keulemans and Groeneveld (2020) offered models aligning with a possible methodology and design of diversity and inclusion as perceived by experts. Keulemans and Groeneveld (2020) provided the theoretical framework of the research outlining previous research findings and overlaying the foundation for an in-depth look at the phenomenon.

The gap in knowledge in the discipline that I addressed is the lack of understanding of the role of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies to foster employee engagement. Despite workplace inclusion being beneficial to positive organizational outcomes, previous studies do not reflect the role of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs on the outcomes of employee performance (Murison & Game-Lopata, 2021). Therefore, a hermeneutic phenomenological study was needed to understand the perceptions and lived experiences of senior managers in their implementation processes. Dubey and Hirsch (2018) noted the research gap to inform the problem statement to build a business case for diversity and inclusion. The goal was to better understand and identify practical perceptiveness lacking in current scholarly research to inform the implementation of inclusion management policies and concepts. Jelaca et al. (2020) provided the theoretical framework of the research outlining previous research findings and overlaying the foundation for an in-depth look on the phenomenon. Kundu et al. (2020) offered workforce diversity and organizational performance.

This study contributes to the understanding of how the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies foster employee productivity.

Hermeneutical phenomenological study was important to understand the perception and lived experiences of inclusion management programs and policies of senior managers.

Problem Statement

The lack of inclusiveness is a problem in managing diversity in today's workforce (Ohunakin et al., 2019). Senior managers are charged with demonstrating leadership commitment to managing diversity and inclusion in the workplace as inclusion concepts go beyond diversity management (Mousa, 2021). According to Dubey and Hirsch (2018), having a diverse workforce does not necessarily depict inclusiveness. The cause of this problem is a deficiency in the participation of diverse employees in the systems and processes in organizations towards achieving the culture of inclusiveness (Akpapuna et. at., 2020).

The general problem was that organizations offered structural changes in policy to create a diverse workforce without enough evidence about the creation of an inclusive environment and conditions to foster productivity (see Buchter, 2021). Diversity and inclusion initiatives expand personnel attributes and resilience for establishing successful business practices in organizations (Rosso, 2021). Banham (2018) acknowledged the difficult nature of measuring diversity.

The specific problem was the impact of senior managers in the New York transportation industry in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies to foster employee engagement. Diversity and inclusion are an integral part of every organization and should be treated like any other performance management tool (Buchter, 2021). Current quantitative studies on diversity and inclusion do not reflect on

the assessment of inclusion on the outcome of job performance (Sabharwal et al., 2019). Hermeneutical phenomenological study is important to address the gap in the current literature to understand the perception and lived experiences of inclusion management programs and policies of senior managers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of 17 senior managers in the New York transportation industry in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies in the New York transportation industry. This research was unique because it contributed to the understanding of how the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies foster employee engagement. This hermeneutic phenomenological study also helped in contextualizing and amplifying the research study with attention to detailed experiential narratives of inclusion management by senior managers. These unique experiences have added to the knowledge of inclusion management policies and programs to inform scholarly understanding. I employed the use of semi structured interviews to encapsulate a detailed report of the lived experiences of the phenomenon, describing moments and giving anecdotal accounts of events experienced while managing diversity and inclusion as managers. I also explored how senior managers use their managerial skills to build diverse working teams in efforts of determining ways to implement inclusion management programs and policies to foster employee engagement.

Research Question

The guiding question for this research study was “What are the lived experiences of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies which support employee engagement?”

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework approach provided a body of literature to support the research study. The research design was a hermeneutic phenomenological study which allowed conducting interviews with 17 senior managers to explore and report on their perceptions and lived experiences in the New York transportation industry. The framework addressed the specific problem of the impact of senior managers in the New York City transportation industry in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies to foster employee engagement. The study was grounded in transformational leadership theory which addressed concepts of Inclusion as a business performance concept, the role played by managerial skills on organizational output, and team performance concepts.

Burns (1978) defined transformational leadership theory as the link that exists between leadership roles and follower engagement. One of the contributing factors towards the creation of an inclusive work environment is leadership commitment to cultural contrast of employees (Sabharwal et al., 2019). A relation exists between workforce diversity management and job performance (Ohunakin et al., 2019). An inclusive work environment has the potential for influencing job satisfaction and yielding organizational outcomes.

Managerial skills are vital in managing diversity in organizations and fostering inclusion management for success. With a better understanding of systems approach, leaders may be effective in conducting inclusion management programs and strategies for sustainable organizational growth (Wondrak & Segert, 2015). The tools and principles for managing diversity are important skills that need to be developed in managers for optimum organizational output. According to Keulemans and Groeneveld (2020), managerial skills are important to successfully manage complexities in developing effective response to increasing employee dynamics.

In an expanded I-P-O (Input-Process-Output) model, there is a shift in research which primarily explores performance in diverse team outcomes (Rubino et al., 2014). Current literature on team effectiveness rests on the I-P-O model (McGrath, 1984). Studies have mostly reflected on the input and output aspects of the I-P-O model as a substitute for the processes involved (Rubino et al., 2014). Group formation is described as visible and invisible. The functions of team effectiveness in transformational leadership are variably characterized by appealing to subordinates and the environmental factors, external factors, internal factors, and group psychosocial (Keulemans & Groeneveld, 2020).

Nature of the Study

The nature of the study was hermeneutical phenomenological study. Qualitative research was consistent with the chosen topic and design method to better understand the lived experiences and perceptions of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies in the public transportation industry. The use of a

qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study was to better understand the lived experiences of 17 senior managers or until saturation was reached in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies in the transportation industry. This sample size was needed to reach saturation. Over the years, theories have been predictive of the impact made by the examination of diversity research in organizations and continues to challenge inclusive outcomes (Martin, 2022).

The use of a hermeneutic phenomenological study in this research established the design of inquiry to record individual lived experiences of the phenomenon as described by the participants in identifying and understanding the characteristics of the phenomenon (see Hein & Austin, 2001). Population selection was an essential part in considering the nature of the study. Data collection for this qualitative research study reached the pinnacle of experiences from several selected individuals who have experienced the phenomenon allowing for a robust philosophical basis through the conducting of interviews (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The use of in-depth interviews for this study was important to have a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon (see Moustakas, 1994). Hermeneutic phenomenological research focuses on exploring detailed accounts of lived experiences which could otherwise be taken for granted to create a better understanding (Lavery, 2003). The words and phrases that reflect the lived experiences of participants in a unique way will present the story from different perspectives (Patton 2015). Concept coding was used for this study for finding levels of meanings by analyzing data collected in a word,

and short phrases (see Saldana, 2016). The use of NVivo coding is appropriate to make meanings out of the raw data.

NVivo was used for organizing storing data collected for analysis. First, NVivo possessed all the characteristics that were needed for qualitative data analysis. NVivo was used to triangulate data responses from collected data and incorporated both spreadsheet and in-depth text queries with robust auto coding which was very practical with large interview data.

Definitions

The academic literature of inclusion management involves a wide range of definitions which encompassed identifying diversity composition in organizations and how they affect daily human resource management as it pertains to a sustainable workplace inclusion. Some of the definitions peculiar to this study are listed below.

Diversity The similarities, differences, and disparities in perceptions among a wide range of humans in organization (Baum, 2021).

Diversity management: The management of a broad spectrum of employees with varying talents and backgrounds to positively affect business dynamics and results (Hennekam et al., 2019).

Inclusion: The creation of a welcoming environment for employees from diverse cultures, descent, social status, and identities to thrive in mutual respect and reach their full potential (Mousa et al., 2021)

Inclusion management: The practice of providing a conducive environment for employees of all backgrounds to thrive and excel (Smith & Angood, 2020).

Inclusive environment: The amalgamation of mutual respect for different opinions and perspectives in alignment with organizational equitable policies and procedures (Sabharwal et al., 2019).

Leadership: The act of establishing processes to achieve organizational behavior and goals in the workplace while managing systems affecting employee outcomes (Martin et al., 2022).

Team: A group of individuals whose responsibilities and outcomes are interdependent and constitute the embodiment of a larger systemic social representation (Bake, 2019).

Team Performance: The collective output of team efforts (Martiqua et al., 2020).

Assumptions

I assumed that the participants would be forthright, free-spoken, and honest with their answers. Also, I assumed that the construction of the interview questions provided enough understanding of diversity and inclusion management as it pertains to their perceptions and experiences. Furthermore, I assumed that this study was devoid of personal biases on the position to distance myself from the study, presenting a clear neutral response and stance to the research phenomenon. Finally, I assumed that senior managers by virtue of their positions had the technical expertise of managing and implementing inclusion management concepts among diversified workforces. These assumptions were necessary to embark on a study that has informed scholarly understanding on the perceptions and lived experiences of the participants regarding the research phenomenon.

Scope and Delimitations

Aspects of the problem of the research question which included understanding the role of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies to foster employee engagement were addressed. This study was limited to senior managers in the New York transportation industry who have publicly declared support for inclusion management indicated on their public website. Declaring support for inclusion publicly indicates the likelihood of the senior managers having knowledge of the principles of diversity and inclusion. The public sector was considered this issue since they had larger tools to train senior management for desirable feedback.

I focused on the perceptions and lived experiences of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies to foster employee productivity. The approach considered soft issues that arose from soft skills such as communication, problem solving, leadership, teamwork, work ethics, adaptability, and people skills. The intent was to assess the possibility of inclusion management links that affect employee efficiency. This research informed scholarly understanding and provided direction for inclusion management programs and policies transferable across all industries and organizational sectors. Inclusion management is the next step to sustaining diversity and diversity management concepts that are in place in all organizations, institutions, and companies in the United States. The study covered only senior managers in the transportation industry.

The impact of personal biases was diminished by establishing all inquiries on the literature information which focused on the study participants viewpoint. To avoid

prejudice as an interviewer, the use of implying questions, suggestive facial expressions, and gestures that may influence participants' vivid recollections was avoided. Participants were not coerced to pursue questions they wish not to answer and/or share their stories. I shared my story with the participants to make them feel comfortable and willing to freely participate and share their stories too. In qualitative research such as mine, the researcher implements the use of bracketing to ensure participants' accounts of the phenomenon are preserved (see Burkholder, 2016).

Limitations

Limitations in a study may be attributed to unforeseen circumstances beyond the researchers' control which may be attributed to the flaws in the study and research designs (Tracy, 2019). Scholars need to take critical consideration into the prevailing flaws associated with the study design, the methodology employed and the data collection to ensure result validity and reliability (Tracy, 2019). Personal bias on the research's subject matter should be an intrinsic limitation in a qualitative research study.

Potential barriers to this study were time and privacy issues. The issue of information security and the guarding of intellectual property discouraged some participants from honestly and openly speaking on the issue of diversity and inclusion, and some from participating in the interviews. Time was a contributive factor as this study involves working senior managers and as such care was taken to allocate times that best worked for both parties throughout data collection, and some could not find the time to be interviewed within the period of the study.

Significance of the Study

This research filled the gap in exploring the perception of diversity and inclusion in business performance goals. I used my study to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies. Park (2020) acknowledged the importance of incorporating diversity and inclusion into organizational culture yet, an inclusive workplace is in needed greatly.

Significance to Practice

With this research, I created awareness and introduced organizations to the realities surrounding diversity management and how inclusive policies and strategies directly reflect employee productivity. At the center of diversity and inclusion is strategic human resource management. According to Murison et al., (2021), it is not enough to have a career if it cannot reflect the benefits of employee performance and overall organizational output. The study therefore was important for management to strategically evaluate human resource management to carefully ascertain the effects on employee performance in an inclusive environment with the research findings.

Significance to Theory

The research informed scholarly understanding and provided direction for inclusion management programs and policies transferable across all industries and organizational sectors. Inclusion management is the next step to sustaining diversity and diversity management concepts that are in place in all organizations, institutions, and companies in the United States. My study covered only senior managers in the

transportation industry. Organizations should put in place principles which work to uplift and not undermine the authenticity of diversity management (Hauret & Williams, 2020).

Significance to Social Change

The social positive change for this study was to raise awareness and create an understanding of how inclusion is seen in organizations and the role it plays in employee engagement. The study fostered a continuous dialogue of inclusion management as it applies to managing diversity in multi-faceted organizations. A relationship exists between workforce diversity management and job performance (Ohunakin et al., 2019). As such, an inclusive work environment has the potential for influencing job satisfaction and yielding organizational outcomes.

Summary and Transition

Diversity management has changed over time since the 1970s, where diversity engagements were charged with radical liberal approaches (Ohunakin et al., 2019). Several authors attribute organizational inclusion concepts as the heart of current diversity management efforts (Sabharwal et., 2019). Inclusion is still a new research concept among researchers in organizational literature. The specific problem was the impact of senior managers in the New York transportation industry in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies to foster employee engagement. In this hermeneutic phenomenological study, I sought to better understand the lived experiences of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies. This research is unique because it contributed to the understanding of how the

implementation of inclusion management programs and policies fostered employee productivity.

In Chapter 1, I identified the background of the study, the problem statement, research question, conceptual framework and the nature of the study as well as addressing the scope and limitations of the study. In Chapter 2, I provide a detailed discussion on literature which supports the multifaceted perspective to the research question. I also analyzed past resources attributed to the different element present for this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The specific problem was the impact of senior managers in the New York transportation industry in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies to foster employee engagement. Diversity and inclusion are an integral part of every organization and should be treated like any other performance management tool (Sabharwal et al., 2019). Current quantitative studies on diversity and inclusion have not reflected on the assessment of inclusion on the outcome of job performance (Sabharwal et al., 2019). Embarking on a hermeneutical phenomenological study was important to understand the perception and lived experiences of inclusion management programs and policies of senior managers. The purpose of this qualitative, hermeneutic phenomenological study was to better understand the lived experiences of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies in the New York transportation industry. This section covers the literature search strategy, detailed literature, and a summary.

Literature Search Strategy

I review literature from three areas in this chapter: inclusion as a business performance concept, the role of managerial skills on organizational output, and team performance concepts. Both the underpinning and current literature of the study were examined. Inclusion management cannot be fully discussed without diversity management. Therefore, other elements of the search strategy were diversity dimensions, functional diversity and how it pertains to inclusion management. I focused on the perceptions and lived experiences of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion

management policies. Some of the literature reviewed was focused on how leadership interpreted and disseminated information to reflect contrasting roles.

Research was conducted reviewing multiple databases, books, reviewed articles, and anthologies on the research topic which helped me to recognize literature pertinent to my study. After extensively reading numerous articles, books, and journals pertaining to my topic, a mosaic emerged leading to the three roadmaps to my study. These focal areas were inclusion as business performance concepts (including inclusion management, diversity management, etc.) the role of managerial skills on organizational output (systems approach, leadership effectiveness, strategies, management programs, etc.) team performance concepts (group formation, functions of team effectiveness, internal factors, external factors, etc.).

Boolean search logic was used in searching for both individual terms and a combination of terms: *inclusion, diversity, diversity and inclusion, diversity and inclusion management, inclusion management, managerial skills, team performance management, performance concepts, organizational culture, challenges of diversity and inclusion management, perceptions and beliefs on diversity inclusion, history of inclusion, and history of diversity.*

The databases used for the recent literature search were Business Source Complete, SAGE Journals and Thoreau database. I also searched EBSCO, ProQuest, and Google scholar which helped in identifying article sources. The reference lists of the articles reviewed, books read, journals and other dissertations were a source as well, as they reflect the relevance and support my study.

Theoretical Foundation

The study was grounded in transformational leadership theory addressing concepts of inclusion as business performance concepts, the role played by managerial skills on organizational output, and team performance concepts. Inclusion management emanated from the concepts of diversity management (Sabharwal et al., 2019). One of the contributing factors towards the creation of an inclusive work environment is leadership commitment to cultural contrast of employees (Sabharwal et al., 2019). A relationship exists between workforce diversity management and job performance (Ohunakin et al., 2019). An inclusive work environment has the potential for influencing job satisfaction and yielding organizational outcomes. Many authors declared the importance of organization inclusion as a current diversity effort (Sabharwal et al., 2019). Inclusion is a strategic human resource management concept at the center of diversity management (Sabharwal et al., 2019).

Burns (1978) introduced transformational leadership theory, concentrating on drastic changes at the workplace in the handling of the needs of the follower and developing those needs into the achievement of set goals. The literature of transformational leadership among other things was seen as visionaries, empowering, social, innovative, and enthusiastic (Mbindyo et al., 2021). Managerial skills are vital in managing diversity in organizations and fostering inclusion management for success. With a better understanding of systems approach, leaders may be effective in conducting inclusion management programs and strategies for sustainable organizational growth (Wondrak & Segert, 2015).

There is a difference between leadership and management (Ferdman, 2020). According to Ferdman (2020), managers take control of situations, seeking quick solutions while leaders tolerate chaos and take their time to figure out the best way possible even if it does not happen immediately. Kotter (2009) described the tools and principles for managing diversity as important skills that need to be developed in managers for optimum organizational output. Therefore, there was the need to successfully manage complexities in developing effective response to increasing employee dynamics (Kotter, 2009).

In an expanded I-P-O model, there is a shift in research which primarily explores performance in diverse team outcomes (Rubino et al., 2014). Current literature on team effectiveness rests on the I-P-O model (McGrath, 1984). Studies have mostly reflected on the input and output aspects of the I-P-O model as a substitute for the processes involved (Rubino et al., 2014). Group formation is described as visible and invisible. The functions of team effectiveness in transformational leadership were variably characterized by appealing to subordinates and the environmental factors, external factors, internal factors, and group psychosocial (Keulemans & Groeneveld, 2020).

Seebeck and Vetter (2022) acknowledged the literature of group dynamics in group cohesion studies as one encompassing all represented. The review focused on significant performance emanating from positive cohesion existing between employee performance and sophisticated models in analytics (Smith & Angood, 2020).

Understanding team differences guides the outcome of team effectiveness (Rubino et al.,

2014). Contemporary directions gravitate towards groups as complex, adaptive, and dynamic systems which divulge ways to study groups (Stazyk et al., 2021).

Literature Review

Inclusion Management: Defining the Origin

Traversing from the 1900s, businesses have stressed the demographic of the workforce and how important it is to diversity and inclusion (Cox, 1991). Since the 1980s, many employers in the United States have been addressing the demographic effects of diversity initiatives and management in the workplace (Cairns & Preziosi, 2014). Distinct types of organizations behave differently to diversity and inclusion initiatives. The size of an organization may affect the way diversity and inclusion are upheld in organizations and subsequently measured. A 1985 published study anticipated that the United States would face a massive demographic and psychographic shift in workforce composition (Johnston, 1987). This plan for diversity management, according to Gilbert et al., (1999), was for the near future.

Ferdman (2020) focused on the development of competency in organizations concerning diversity and inclusion. Organizational leadership has had a magnificent effect on the discussion of diversity and inclusion in organizations. Management support is needed to address issues surrounding diversity and inclusion in organizations. As characterized by inclusion management practices, Organizations must adhere to the fact the workforce is made up of diverse cultures and talents (Mousa et al., 2021). Thus, the building of cultures, principles, processes, and practices should be put in place to uplift and not undermine the authenticity of diversity management (Akpapuna et. al., 2020).

The challenge managers faced was how to consider addressing the misunderstanding surrounding the implementation of effective diversity and inclusion (Frémeaux, 2020). The building of diversity within organizations helped to sound the trumpet of inclusion and how it affects employee performance.

Diversity and inclusion management has been shaped by political and social movements resulting in established policies in today's workplace. Some benefits derived from the movement include affirmative action, gender equity (Milliken & Martins, 1996), equal employment opportunity racial equality, and understanding cross-culturalism in organizations (Mor Barak, 2019). According to Valerio (2022), both organizational leaders and diversity professionals agreed that current practices of managing people still mimic that of the mid-1960s. Rather than focus on relationships and representations, there was a need for inclusion of all represented management policies to be reviewed.

Mor Barak (2015) discussed the importance of inclusion in the context of diversity. The author acknowledged strides made along the way of this discussion on diversity and inclusion. Since the inception of the dialogue of diversity and inclusion, there was recognition of the importance of inclusion in the context of diversity. Also, theoretical foundations had been laid for further discussion and research. It also provided the opening of research evidence of the connection that existed between diversity and inclusion as it relates to individuals and organizations. The research revealed that the concept of diversity and inclusion management was said to enhance the premise of organizational management. Reflections on innovative approaches present in recent

government initiatives seeking to intercede the implementation of diversity and inclusion in corporate governance (Meli & Spindler, 2021).

Challenges

Increased diversity challenges continue to plague organizations in a way that is not new to management in recent times (Akpapuna et. al., 2020). Therefore, it was important for organizations to acknowledge the challenges and benefits diversity, and inclusion brought to organizations and the workforce. Researchers have pointed out the fact that unchecked diversity and inclusion may yield a negative impact on the effectiveness of groups intended to help (Akpapuna et. al., 2020). Managers are faced with the challenge of managing diversity to reflect the quality of productivity and profit emanating from homogenous teams (Mor Barak, 2019).

In cases such as discrimination, retaliation, and privacy, the Roberts court focused on human resources development rather than the litigation engaged in enforcing employment and labor laws and upholding diversity management policies favorable outcomes (Stazyk et al., 2021). Employment law is available to all irrespective of their backgrounds, race, gender, religion, and any form of discriminatory factors. Inclusion and equity comprise exists between the strategies to build a culture and the promotion of active involvement by stakeholders (Sotto-Santiago, 2020). The civil rights act of 1991 is seen to have transformed Title VII cases (Valerio, 2022). Cultural diversity became the centerpiece for making economic policies globally.

According to Akpapuna et. al., (2020), there is no conclusive way to define cultural diversity, mostly because it is overly broad and has more to it than simply a

definition across various disciplines. Cultural concepts in organizations dwelled on the legality that equal employment opportunity renders it illegal for any employer to discriminate based on cultural backgrounds over being qualified (Murison et al., 2021). The United Nations, under its convention on cultural diversity, adopted United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which supports human rights and embraces diversity (Burri, 2010). Globally, research highlighted the prevailing barriers to women advancement in leadership positions casting the need for change in the fundamental structure of inclusion management policies (Mundy & Seuffert, 2020).

In conceptualizing the global marketplace of diversity and inclusion, the popularly known *four Ps* in product marketing, price, product, place, and promotion, made business marketing communication easier (Mor Barak, 2019). The issue of identity in the workplace is crucial currently more than ever, as the traditional identification of gender is characterized by how one relates to and perceive themselves. The research suggested that identifying urban subculture which will alleviate consumer antipathy towards the use of American products (Henderson & Williams, 2013). This helped to promote products of American cultural descent with representation of a vast diversified workforce.

According to Giannakoulis (2020), there was a need to inculcate intercultural development of self-awareness to satisfy the complexities in the implementation diversity and organizational inclusion. Diversity and inclusion started from places of education and the building of wealth of knowledge. It is therefore important to introduce diversity not only in school curriculum, but also in the overall school administration (Watson, 2016).

According to Watson (2016), Brown University being an Ivy League school has had its fair share of institutional racism as affected students pleaded to be heard by the university. Although students were invited to speak about their concerns, that seemed to be all that they got, with no intended action taken.

The research findings of Ozturk and Tatli (2016) showed some of the challenges faced by transgender persons in organizations. Some of these challenges were not limited to occupational discrimination which were industry specific. Some organizations were found not to be accommodative to transgender individuals and employees with minimal support for them (Ozturk & Tatli, 2016). The issue of equality in diversity management is crucial to managing gender identity in organizational inclusion (Frémeaux, 2020). It is important for an organization to create an organizational culture which embraces all forms of diversity and fosters a non-judgmental work environment (Ozturk & Tatli, 2016). This practice helped promote employee engagement in the workplace.

Benefits

Organizations that create a welcoming environment for diversity and inclusion are bound to see improvement in organizational output and overall business performance goals. The culture of diverse people interacting in a productive and constructive way is enabled by inclusion management (Smith & Angood, 2020). It is therefore imperative for structures to reflect the positive message of the importance and emergence of diversity and inclusion in organizations (Akpapuna et. al., 2020). The Civil Rights Act of 1991 focused on litigation-related concerns, which happened prior to the supreme court decisions as well as the more recent amendment, the Americans with Disabilities Act, are

also litigation-oriented (Bodie, 2013). Organizational safety and health hazards were among laws which sought to promote safety in the workplace. Nongovernmental agencies, businesses, and corporations are all governed by law to provide an incident free working environment and protocols to curtail such occurrences.

According to Button (2018), disability is respected by people and may be due to physical and or mental impairment. This law protects people with health condition from having their health be a deciding factor in disrupting their career life. Disability is a state-by-state issue, and it is dealt with differently depending on the legislature in place. Human rights enshrined in the constitution of the United States is the foundation on which these laws are formulated (Button, 2018). There continues to be a revolution in employment and labor laws to best serve the citizens and boost productivity. Perception of diversity and inclusion cuts across all occupations, organizations, and academia (Burton-Jones & Sarker, 2021). Inclusion management is dependent on collaborative and process leadership management (Ansel et al., 2020). It played a vital role where there is human effort and thus needs to be given the attention to having a conversation (Murison & Game-Lopata, 2021).

Building Inclusive Diversity Culture

Over the past 30 years, there have been efforts to bridge the diversity and inclusion gap in operations and employee treatment division (Carter, 2017). According to Murison et al. (2021), diversity and inclusion programs spans from the 1960s, an era where anti discriminatory laws were passed in the United States and other countries and economies. In recent years, the issue of dealing with diversity in organizations has played

a greater role in the global working environment. Organizations recognize the rich diversity multicultural working environments bring and how organizations try to promote inclusion across borders in a global economy (Jain & Pareek, 2020). Although companies seem to be recognizing diversity and inclusion, organizational structures depict a different scenario. For organizations to fully embrace diversity and inclusion, it is important for them not only recognize the phenomenon but also restructure organizational policies and systems to fully reflect the importance and impacts of diversity and inclusion. The issue of building a culture of diversity and inclusion in the workplace requires building long term measures and commitment (Murison et al., (2021).

Fujimoto and Uddin (2021) created an underlying assumption of how culture was perceived and its legal effects on global trade. According to Fujimoto and Uddin (2021) the eradication of discriminatory practices amongst participants of international trade. The laws on diversity and inclusion varied from country to country and are affected by the culture of the land. The future of diversity, cultural differences, and discrimination is still a work in progress to embrace changes. However, with recent activities on promoting mixed cultural diversities, global economic laws have a duty and a chance to further make impacts to positive change. According to Mojapelo and Musandiwa (2020), employment equity reports are indicators of ratios of gender representation in all levels in the organization. Employees are legally bound by the enforcement of affirmative action.

Mor Barak (2019) suggested that humans naturally adapt to the sense of belongingness, and as such, acceptance is of essence in social settings. Recognition is also an aspect of human survival which needs to be acknowledged. These characteristics

make the issue of diversity and inclusion sophisticated. Mor Barak showed that diversity drove competitive advantage and inclusion with likelihood to endorse diversity and inclusion initiatives. It was discovered that, although they were the dominant group, they were excluded from diverse communication most of the time.

The recent increase in the implementation of diversity equity and inclusion in organization have boosted the issue of critical consideration among organizational leaders and industry players with focus on fast-paced progress in diversity and inclusion initiatives (Ferdman, 2020). According to Feeney et al., (2019), management strategy evaluation involved consolidating varying managerial systems to create and manage uncertainties and risks for positive tradeoffs.

According to Ormiston (2016), group dynamics in managing diversity portrayed the perception of diversity by virtue of individual differences and experiences in the group. Being that individual motives may vary, Ormiston acknowledged distinctive motives and perceived group composition. Ormiston used quantitative analysis with hypothesis to further illustrate how groups behaved in an objective and subjective environment. Using a multilevel process, Ormiston explained with a diagram the process of how objective group combinations affected group dynamics and performance through individual levels as it pertains to processing identities. Managers ought to welcome diversity management programs aimed at fostering an impartial working climate for inclusive initiatives (Madera et al., 2017).

Workplace diversity and discrimination against women has been a topic which has gradually taking roots in the labor and employment market. The issue of choosing the

best candidate for a job is often attributed to the male counterparts due to varying cultural dispensation and traditions. Valerio (2022) reported that, there were very few women in management compared to their male counterparts. Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) rests its outcome on the ability for organizations to keep track of women development in management positions and upward mobility to managerial positions (Valerio, 2022). There had been significant difference recorded between 1970 and 2018, statistics shows a 57% in women participation in a 50-year history (Valerio, 2022). Valerio examined different forms of responsibility and accountability geared towards the improvement of the gender diversity present in management in the labor force.

Inclusion in Public Organization

Public organizations adopted diverse fairness management to create an equal employment opportunity for their employees. Kim and Park (2017) focused on finding out the effects of diversity management on the public sector. Equity theory concept was usually interpreted as a positive relationship existing between employee work output and the corresponding remuneration (Kim & Park, 2017). There was a cause for alarm when remuneration was not done on a fair basis. An effective fairness and diversity policy in organizations stands to boost employee morale and increase their work output. The study concluded that organizations who employed fairness and effective diversity management recorded higher employee engagement compared to those with cases of unfair labor practices (Kim & Park, 2017).

A survey conducted to ascertain the relationship existing between job satisfaction, managing diversity and work group performance among United States federal employees

showed a strong link between diversity management and all the other variables (Choi & Rainey, 2010). The study findings showed that work group performance and diversity management benefited employees who were people of color compared to their white colleagues. Until this research, there was minimal experimental research to investigate this phenomenon. A major federal survey which included 140,000 participant responses which used group performance and job satisfaction as the dependent variables. The independent variable used in this study was the degree to which employees felt diversity management was practiced. The findings showed a strong link on the perception of diversity management to work group performance and job satisfaction.

According to Sabharwal et al., (2019), the federal government should be opened to support a workplace environment that has a positive impact on turnover suggesting the implementation of effective change structures in an organization's inclusion culture in public sectors. Managers must take real action and not just talk on issues affecting the implementation of inclusion management policies (Sabharwal et al., 2019). Institutions must endeavor to adhere to the inclusion of invisible and visible identities of employees with practices geared towards the acknowledgement of their employees as a positive step toward achieving workplace inclusion (Sabharwal et al., 2019). Particularly, there is the issue of women in management positions and diversity and inclusion reducing as the career ladder enters the senior management roles (Borry et al., 2021).

Inclusion in Other Disciplines

Inclusion management transcends through disciplines. According to Zhang et al., (2016), student diversity education is essential to teaching people the relevance of this

phenomenon. Zhang et al., (2016) acknowledged that in recent times the population of international students has surged and continues to increase, especially in business schools increasing diversity in the educational system. These students form growing organizations with skills and knowledge acquired. Sulasmi and Akrim (2020), acknowledged some of the challenges students with special needs faced due to lack of special services during the learning process. Furthermore, Zhang et al. (2016) also found teachers used learning materials which were not tailored to the needs of students with special needs, neither were the teachers equipped to fully assist students with special needs.

It is therefore important for the educational system to develop and impact a competency-based approach to improving diversity and inclusion in academia. The current diversity education in place is only geared towards valuing cultural differences and the challenge of biases associated with race and cultural inequalities but does not address the academic disadvantages experienced by a diverse student body. Research conducted by Cardoso da Silva & Helal (2019) showed that irrespective of the perceived personal management policies by the evolution of diversity, there is still the lack of sufficient and effective inclusion management programs for individuals with disabilities. Inculcating diversity and inclusion in education helped to prepare future senior managers for the urge and understanding of the subject matter.

Strategic Change Culture

Culture forms part of the basis of human capital in a diversified organization. Diversity and inclusion are acknowledged as a significant force that influences change in

organizations (Miller, 1998). According to Miller (1998), diversity and inclusion helped create a high performing organizational environment. Diverse cultures bring diversified knowledge and the ability to shift and adapt to new perspectives which projects organizational performance Giannakoulis (2020). It is therefore imperative for systems to reflect the importance and emergence of diversity and inclusion in organizations. There was still a lot of work to be done after decades of continued human resource management and concerns of effective workplace management with diversity and inclusion.

Diversity and inclusion are characterized as cultures, principles, processes, and practices (Chung et al., 2020). Organizations must adhere to the fact that the workforce is made up of diverse cultures and talents. Organizations should put in place principles which work to uplift and not undermine the authenticity of diversity management (Hauret & Williams, 2020). It is important for organizations to consider addressing the misunderstanding surrounding the implementation of effective diversity and inclusion. Employee disputes could emanate from the differences in their needs attributed to behavioral disparities in accessing the various employee representation (Akpapuna et. al., 2020). The building of diversity within organizations helps to sound the trumpet of inclusion and how it affects employee engagement.

According to Mousa (2021), Organizations need to adapt to the current employee demographics when considering building employee engagement culture. Hiring and promotional decisions should not be based solely on individual differences but rather merit (Mousa, 2021). A more formidable commitment to managing inclusion should

extend from the mere representation of a diverse workforce and extend to the full assessment of employee policies and actions and the impact it has on organizational culture (Borry et al., 2021). However, multiculturalism was supported by minorities more than colorblindness and the majority support the vice versa (Cuhadar, 2019).

In recent years, the issue of diversity and inclusion on organizational board membership has been on the rise and drawn more attention. Griffin et al., (2021) examined the issue of diversity in boardrooms with mandatory gender representation in government organizations and its performance. Griffin et al., (2021) investigated the representation of board gender diversity and the influence on innovation. According to Griffin et al., (2021) board characteristics in 12,244 firms across forty-five countries were recorded in between 2001 and 2014 and found out that indeed board performed is influenced by gender diversity. Boards that encouraged diversity also encouraged majority group members to engage in minority inclusion. The research showed that, from a practical point of view, conducting further research on diversity and inclusion encourages board members to embrace inclusion. The findings of the research also pointed out that boards which had more gender diversity will have more governance practices which are effective than those with less or no diversity.

Business Case for Inclusion

History of human resource management and how far it has come with diversity and inclusion concerns. According to Yamauchi & Sato (2021) there have been discussions regarding the dynamics of diversity and the impact on organizational outcomes, however, the discussions started changing in the mid to late 1990's. It was

important for organizational management to include steps to inculcate diversity and inclusion into organizational policies and procedures (Yamauchi & Sato 2021). There is still a lot to be done after decades of continued human resource management and the concerns of effective workplace management with diversity and inclusion. An inclusive workplace promotes a strong and flourishing work environment (Mor Barak, 2019).

Warren and Warren (2021) presented ideas which supported diversity and inclusion management in organizations. Among those discussed are promoting within the organization and sharing messages of diversity and inclusion, increasing the awareness of diversity and inclusion from the community level, employee groups encouraged to engage in mutually respectful conversations and embracing differences while setting of accountability goals for diversity and inclusion within organizations. To date, diversity and inclusion are talked about more than ever, and yet the issue still lingers on long term support and dedication (Warren & Warren 2021). According to Mousa (2021), several authors have identified three phases of diversity management with the use of varying work environments. These three stages include minority assimilations which center on equal representation in various groups (Mousa, 2021).

Stressing the benefits of diversity, Marais et al., (2020) acknowledged the increase of organizational performance judging from a diversified workforce, and the variety of talent that diversity pulls into the organization, and the rich organizational culture. The French business have since the 2000's gradually been recognizing diversity in their workplace and thus the need for initiatives from the college standpoint and upcoming managers to know and deliberate about the importance of diversity and

inclusion to foster longevity (Marais et al., 2020). However, issues of multiculturalism are presumed to be more receptive to racial differences. This in turn promoted inclusiveness in the work environment, gave a more compelling strategy of diversity and inclusion in a white dominated workplace.

The subject of business case for organizations engaging in inclusive workplace are presented with a wide range of talent pools (Kaplan, 2020). According to the author, there is evidence of the recognition of shared value in business practices (Kaplan, 2020). Research has addressed the possible limitations associated with recruiting varying diverse employee pool for a fair representation (Morven & Cunningham, 2020). Multiculturalism was presented as an inclusive work environment in the implementation process. According to Rosenstock & Shenkman (2021), diverse workforce depicted richer employee work life balance and productivity.

Inclusion management empowers delegation as a core management skill reflective of employee's capabilities and cognitive development (Rees & Porter, 2015). One of the impediments to constructive delegation is the social anxiety emanating from the use of power, stemming from the cognitive and cultural differences of managers (Rees & Porter, 2015). Organizations were guided by human resource policies to meet diversity and inclusion commitments and expectations of employees (Li, Y. et al., 2019). Diversity integration involves organizations' voluntary actions to choose groups of employees from divergent backgrounds and co-exist by reaching a common socio-cultural goal (Mousa, 2021).

Social Inclusion

According to Gururaj et al. (2020), social inclusion initiatives have traditionally been used in cultural settings, depicting the function of their use. Social inclusion programs may have been designed as a tool to promote economic parity in France, diversity in United States, or social justice in Brazil (Gururaj, 2020). The Social impact of inclusion in elementary education is essential to the emotional challenges children with special needs face (Bemiller, 2019). The study revealed that more tailored support staff is important for the successful teaching of children with special needs. In addition, there was the need for assistance to better understand children with social and emotional challenges (Bemiller, 2019). According to the writer, building a collaborative learning environment was essential to ensure teachers share strategic teaching information for the growth of children.

A study conducted by Goodman & Kaplan (2019) showed gender inequalities prevalent in many countries. Although there has been improvement in recent years, there still was a disproportionate gap in status, income, promotion, and developmental opportunities under the United Nations' sustainable development goals (SDGs) (Goodman & Kaplan 2019). The research explored gender differences in the experiences of human resource management policies in the workplace. The findings showed globally, the expectations of women at work were not met compared to those of their male counterparts (Goodman & Kaplan 2019). Particularly in two dominant areas of human resource practices including recognition at work and support from managers and supervisors (Murison & Game-Lopata, 2021).

Global Settings

Organizations were different in every way and diversity showed the differences in culture and the way of life of people. Marsella (2009) recommends diversity and inclusion training in organizations to promote the relationship between a diversified workforce. As the world becomes a global village, immigration has always been in existence and is on the rise. The differences in people are most visible in immigrants, as their differences may lead to conflict or be a source of survival. Planning the implementation of diversity management has become imperative in globalization where organizational systems and practices create potential for inclusion advantages (Rawat & Basergekar, 2016). The leverage of different sets of programs organized by organizations to drive a competitive edge sort to create success of heterogenous teams in the guest to build team advancement and the creating of opportunities (Mousa, 2021).

Globalization has minimized the lines of organizational differences in demographics much closer than they appear to be. Griffin et al., (2021) discussed the importance of inclusion and how it helped to embrace differences in human capital and how inclusion is for the good of the organization. It is a global issue, as every continent has issues on diversity and inclusion on diverse levels (Pepple, 2017). According to Griffin et al., (2021), Norway introduced gender diversity quota in 2003 and set it at 40%. Organizations made of diverse individuals with diverse cultures and values that channel into quality diversity and inclusion management and helped to positively impact employee output in organizations.

Wang et al. (2016) evaluated the relationship between apprehension, team creativity, and cognitive dimension with South Korean employees. The results of the study showed, where there was transformational leadership, relationships were stronger. A study conducted by Huh & Kashian (2021) sought to ascertain the significance of female representation in Fortune 500 companies board representation. They found a recent increase of about 18% in about three thousand large public trading companies. According to Elwick (2020), the United Kingdom sector of education has long upheld the impact of diversity, equality, and inclusion as a vital part of pursuing organizational values.

Downside

To minimize conflict emanating from diversity, employees must be enlightened on the cultural differences and engage in the sharing of strength and experiences from diversity to equip them to do their assigned jobs collectively when needed (Richardet al., 2021). People attribute diverse conflict to self-centeredness of some people trying to score personal gains in organizational politics. The issue becomes employees scrambling for limited political affiliation in organizations for promotions that were not merit based. Migration is caused by varying reasons including economic, civil conflicts, scarcity of resources and the change of environment which may be caused by poverty. Environmental disasters were also seen to be one of the reasons why people migrate. With the world engaging in several types of international trade, there were some universal values employed by the writer to be observed to achieve excellence. Some of these values are tolerance, sustainability, education, and justice (Marsella, 2009).

Accountability

Designing accountability into diversity and inclusion initiatives was a strategy aimed at measuring the intangibility of diversity and inclusion in the workplace (Richardet al., 2021). Putting strategies in place to measure the outcome of diversity and inclusion helped to make better informed strategic human resource decisions. This was done to achieve meaningful and measurable business results of diversity and inclusion in the workplace (Kanti Agustiady, 2019). One of the reasons why diversity and inclusion has not yet gained the recognition and attention it deserves is the lack of identifying the skill set needed to support the eminent skill deficiencies (Richardet al., 2021). According to the author, organizations should align their skill sets against diversity to quantify the number of skills inclusion initiatives that have added to the organizational business performance. The research conducted sought to illustrate the need for the inclusion of diverse individuals in organizations.

Differences in workforce demographics made it challenging for organizations to develop and implement successful approaches to diversity and inclusion (Roberson, 2020). The struggle for equality in the workplace was real and a pressing issue which needed to be addressed by management (Griffin et al., 2021). According to the writer, the use of colorblindness in addressing equality in the workplace sparked the issue of employees struggling to express themselves in their cultural backgrounds. Valerio (2022) suggested that subsequent research should focus on exploring how managing diversity by organizations can change in a span of time in relation to environmental circumstances.

The research presented a part of diversity management approach embedded in theories of social psychology and intercultural psychology.

Diversity in the workplace should be managed to represent the individual's uniqueness while operating in an all-inclusive environment (Jones, 2018). Using the melting pot metaphor, which suggested that differences were not to be seen, and that people should not be identified by their social affiliations but as individuals (Stazyk et al., 2021). Organizations must create an all-inclusive working environment which gives equal opportunity for women to excel. The traditional way of men receiving the upper hand in leading management must change to competency-based management where the best person leads irrespective of their gender (Park, 2020). Policies which tend to decrease career advancement for women must be aborted and replaced with more functional career progression for women.

Managing People Effectively

At the center of diversity and inclusion is strategic human resource management. According to Murison et al., (2021), it is not enough to have a career if it cannot reflect the benefits of employee performance and overall organizational output. It is therefore important for management to strategically evaluate human resource management to carefully ascertain the effects on employee performance in an inclusive environment. Underwood, K. M. (2021) explored the significant importance of managing diversity in an organization while providing a healthy competitive environment for employees to excel. Organizational fluidity affects performance-based management and presents numerous factors including mentoring and networking. The art of mentoring equipped

and enabled staff development and succession planning in organizations, thereby promoting employee retention (Elwick, 2020).

There is a relationship that exists between diversity management and emotional intelligence among health workers in healthcare management. According to Oyewunmi (2018), soft skills in addition to managerial skills are needed to help manage the workplace effectively as employees have become increasingly sensitive to intra-personal skills given today's diversified workplace. There was a needed tactical approach to deal with people from diverse backgrounds and not affect employees (Bake, 2019). Emotional intelligence influenced the management diversity in the workplace (Oyewunmi, 2018). However, research suggested that it has not been shown as having a direct relationship to managing diversity in the workplace.

According to Rablet al., (2020), diversity and inclusion is one of the topics in organizational management culture, and as such must be given the needed attention. Labor markets and labor laws are more engaged in diversity and inclusion than they have ever been. Research conducted in varying fields of study showed evidence of perceptions from employees in Germany and the USA on organizational integration amid diversity. The writer, however, dwelled on the issues of diversity and how they affected organizational management. Using a variety of characteristics, the writer focused on the primary dimensions of diversity and inclusion but not limited to age, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

For organizations to create a successful diversity and inclusive workplace, management should endeavor to create a long-term structure which supports diversity

and inclusion culture in the organization (McCloskey, 2013). The myth of future global generations not experiencing and or witnessing racism is addressed by the author. If there are differences and increases in growing organizational cultures, diversity will need to address the need for a long-term plan to continue tackling the issues. Underwood (2021) acknowledged the rise in the quest for managing diversity due to changes in demographics to equip organizations to deal effectively with diversity and inclusion management equitably.

Managing diversity has not been translated into practice from research. There is therefore a need for researchers to extend awareness towards diversity management practices in organizations. Keulemans & Groeneveld (2020) examined the relationship between theoretical and practical connections of managing diversity practices on performance driven by data and measurable processes. The research result for diversity in groups showed a better outcome in enhancing employee's critical thinking for organizational bottom-line outcomes (Pizio, 2020).

Increasing Difficulty

Diversity was associated with ethnicity as it represented different talents of people who identify with diverse ethnic groups. It was so vast that it covered issues ranging from gender to ethnicity; diversity goes beyond just color (Pepple, 2017). In recent times, the issue of diversity and inclusion has attracted attention in the business world, sending organizations to deliberate on it (Roberson, 2020). To better understand the issue of diversity and inclusion, one must appreciate the role played by organizational politicization, existing economic inequalities and conversations happening within smaller

groups in organizations (Rabl, 2020). All these served as factors affecting the implementation, awareness, and creation of diversity and inclusion initiatives in organizations.

The issue of diversity and inclusion is a pragmatic way to solve. It is crucial to therefore continue researching the issue of diversity and inclusion to better present ways of addressing it (Seebeck & Vetter, 2022) in organizations. The issue of diversity and inclusion is complex in corporate America (Pal et al., 2021). Opponents claimed that there was low representation of diversity in leadership, however, it was recorded that high number of organizations embraced and engaged in organizational change and put measures in place to address the issue of diversity and inclusion (Seebeck & Vetter, 2022). Organizations have over the years joined the fight against employee discrimination emanating from the issue of diversity and inclusion (Jones, 2019). Researchers have used contrasting perspectives to classify team diversity, while distinguishing between surface level and deep-level diversity affecting most facets of the subject matter (Jones, 2019).

Turnbull et al., (2009) found that companies did not readily allow the use of assessment to ascertain the impact of diversity and inclusion on employee skill sets. Also, an implication for management includes design and evaluations for linking diversity and productivity. Stazyk et al., (2021) revealed the assertions of diversity and inclusion as practiced by some organizations. To portray themselves as valuing this phenomenon, organizations offer the necessary positions including but not limited to a diversity and inclusion department and employee groups and yet there is quantum of practice needed to

reflect the actualization. This, according to the author, was because of corporate frustration regarding the subject matter.

Team Performance

The study of teams and teamwork has been a focal point in knowledge sharing outcomes in organizations. The dynamics of effective teams are better understood by implementing a well-structured team base with underlining functional background that reflect varying educational backgrounds (Yamauchi & Sato, 2021). The prevailing framework used for team effectiveness is the expanded I-P-O model. There was a shift in research which primarily explored performance in diverse team outcomes (Rubino et al., 2014). Current literature on team effectiveness rests on the I-P-O model (McGrath, 1984). Studies have mostly reflected on the input and output aspects of the I-P-O as a substitute for the processes involved (Rubino et al., 2014). Group formation is described as visible and invisible. The functions of team effectiveness are variably characterized by environmental factors, external factors, internal factors, and group psychosocial and dynamics (Mor Barak, 2019).

Diversity and Inclusion was one of the topics in organizational management culture, and hence, the need to focus on it. Labor markets and labor laws are more engaged in diversity and inclusion to encourage the implementation policies (Stazyk et al., 2021). In every organization, performance drives success and therefore must be taken seriously. Diversity managers must endeavor to acknowledge the power of working in teams and projecting interferences emanating from difference in backgrounds (Hung et al., 2021). The ability to recognize diverse cultures present in the workplace, respect

differences, and acknowledging the contributions made through the differences in cultural representation in organizations is paramount to team performance (Angood, 2019). Also, valuing other cultures, encouraging groups with diverse cultures, and empowering people to not only bring out the best in others but strengthen themselves while celebrating each other's differences (Angood, 2019).

Research highlights diverse backgrounds and professions, through cooperation that may either increase performance management and or may be prone to increased conflict to impede performance (Stazyk et al., 2021). According to Yamauchi & Sato (2021), a relationship exists between team behavior integration and functional diversity. The study revealed the effectiveness of team learning in functional diversity with attributes to executive demographics leading to increased performance. Yamauchi & Sato (2021) attributed the goals of increasing performance and managing diversity to the probability of significant variance in practice and measuring levels of diversity levels existing in organizations.

Ferdman et al. (2020) used a conceptual framework in addressing the presumed interactive effect of diversity and inclusion in a group setting in relation to job performance. They proposed a shared encounter of the positive association of diversity and inclusion as represented in group performance. Study showed that groups influence a collective output of creativity and motivation to pursue more (Fife et al., 2021). The paper therefore concentrated on the relationship between diversity and how it affects performance. Stazyk et al., (2021) found in a comprehensive assessment of the dynamics of effectiveness of teams among startups and existing ventures. Among other things, it

was found that diverse teams performed highly in competitive ventures and in cooperative ventures within a heterogeneous workforce.

Team cohesion was found to diminish effective team performance in the organization demographics (Mor Barak, 2019). Inclusion management dealt with celebrating varying differences in the individualities each employee brings to the team to be effective (Kirchenbauer, 2020). The proposed assertions of diversity as a moderator, and inclusion being a predictor of diversity also focused on the examination and harnessing of collective performance and the effects of diversity and inclusion on group level performance (Stazyk et al., 2021). The article suggested future research examine several aspects of diversity in identifying the variant effects on relationship between inclusion and performance.

Summary and Conclusions

The surge of diversity and inclusion in today's working environment has brought about ongoing training and awareness of this subject (Mor Barak, 2019). Workers and managers were trained in how to make the organizational environment diversity friendly and include a diversified representation of employees across the board. The literature presented a review of critical incident methods, suggesting the development of skills for the effectiveness of diversity in organizations.

Studies have shown that more research from human resource management policies on diversity and inclusion goes a long way to improve policies and procedures of managing diversity and inclusion in the workplace (Theodorakopoulos & Budhwar, 2015). The writer gave an example of organizations reviewing policies based on research

positive results to reflect D&I management policies. The literature reviewed covered areas essential to the study including (a) inclusion as a business performance concept, (b) management skills and organizational leadership output and (c) team performance concepts.

The related literature to inclusion management falls into categories related to the transformation of inclusion management policies. The inception involves scholarly inquiry emphasizing the origin of inclusion management and the potential for positive impact on business policies, procedures, and performance management. This stage ended with the challenges and benefits thus far from scholarly literature. The next phase in the literature inquiry about inclusion management explored the link between building inclusive diversity culture and the evolution of managing diversity concepts to present. These studies included a vigorous study on the effects of employee performance at both personal, team and organizational levels. Workplace diversities influence an inclusive work environment with the potential for influencing job satisfaction and yielding organizational outcomes. Most of the studies conducted are quantitative inquiries to show the impact of diversity performance with little to no inclusion management.

The literature in this study also revealed inclusion in other disciplines including but not limited to education, ethnicity, gender disparities, international and global settings. The in-depth literature review delved into subjects with scant research and to further elaborate on the importance of the study. The study showed the importance for this study as it is a global issue, every continent has issues of diversity and inclusion on varying levels.

Inclusion management includes the role played by managerial skills on organizational output. The literature on team management and firms is rooted in the developmental stages of current concepts of human relations and interactions in organization. I used the role of management and managerial skills to highlight organizational output to further reflect the conceptual framework of my study.

Finally, I reviewed literature on team performance concepts. The literature revealed the dynamics of effective teams to better understand the implementation of a well-structured team base. The framework was used to expand on the I-P-O model. There is a gap in how team effectiveness is affected by a vast representation of diverse team members.

Although the literature revealed in-depth discussions on the research phenomenon, it still showed a gap in addressing the lived experiences of senior manager's understanding of the role of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies to foster employee engagement. This research is unique because it may contribute to the understanding of how the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies foster employee productivity.

In Chapter 3, I illustrated the process through which the identified gap in the study was addressed with a qualitative research plan. Starting from the research design and rationality, and then to the role of the researcher. The methodology also discussed the logic behind the participants selection, the research instrumentation, pilot study and the data analysis plan.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative, hermeneutic phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of 17 senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies in the New York transportation industry. This research was unique because it contributed to the understanding of how the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies fostered employee productivity. This hermeneutic phenomenological study also helped in contextualizing and amplifying the research study with attention to detailed experiential narratives of inclusion management by senior managers. In this chapter, I discuss the research design as it conforms to the study and the reason behind the choice of a hermeneutic phenomenology, the role of the researcher, the methodology and sampling techniques, criteria for participants selection, the collection and analysis of data, issues of trustworthiness, and the summary.

Research Design and Rationale

The guiding question for this research study was “What are the perceptions and attitudes of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies which support employee engagement?” This research question emanated from wanting to ascertain the lived experiences of senior managers efforts in the quest to further contribute to the policies and strategies used by organizations to foster inclusion management and optimizing employee engagement.

There is a link between inclusive management and its benefit to managing organizational diversity policy managements with senior level management in the

transportation industry. In Chapter 2, I specified both current and past chronological inquiry into diversity management practices with little emphasis on inclusivity which is seen as an element affecting team performance. Most of the current literature portrays pertinent studies on the current sequence of inquiry ranging from a firm's human resources department and top hierarchical teams in the senior executive branch (Rubino et al., 2014). However, there was an exclusion with those responsible for implementing the inclusive initiatives closest to direct teams and overseeing performance management (Pal et al., 2021). My research design had this specific population in mind.

The focus of my research study was the idea of exploring the perceptions and attitudes of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs. Managing inclusion is essential in managing teams in diverse workplaces. Inclusion connotes employee involvement in the systems and processes of the organizational structure (Ohunakin et al., 2019). In reference to the lack of firms realizing the positive outcomes of inclusion management and the role it plays in employee performance was an inspiration for my study.

This hermeneutic phenomenological study has also helped in contextualizing and amplifying the research study with attention to detailed experiential narratives of inclusion management by senior managers. These unique experiences added to the knowledge of inclusion management policies and programs to inform scholarly understanding. In this study, I used semi structured interviews to encapsulate a detailed report of the lived experiences of the phenomenon, describing moments and giving anecdotal accounts of events experienced while managing diversity and inclusion as

managers. I also explored how senior managers use their managerial skills through lived experiences to help to build diverse working teams aimed at achieving employee engagements from their various departments.

The use of case study allows for an intense and detailed study of the research phenomenon in a particular organization or social unit (Burkholder, 2016). However, it was more appropriate for a qualitative study than a quantitative study with respect to my study. Initially, grounded theory was considered to contribute to both scholarly and practical aspects of inclusion management policies as it pertains to senior management. However, the use of grounded theory although provided methodical ways in viewing a perspective (Burkholder, 2016), the research question allowed for a hermeneutic phenomenological study to better understand the perceptions and lived experiences needed to make positive social change and to reflect the true meaning and impact of the study.

The philosophical and practice of phenomenological research approach expands from the heritage of both Husserl (1959-1938) and that of Heidegger (1889-1976). These two philosophers devised phenomenology as a study of awareness and the scrutiny of *being there* (Solomon, 2000). This connotes the idea of learning things from experiences and not as things are projected to be. Phenomenology enabled the ability to experience the world through reflections and the reporting from experiences to make sense of our observations (Van Manen, 2016).

The study of phenomenology as an approach has progressed over time in both theory and practice. Hermeneutic phenomenology was concerned with the lived

experiences of the research participants while requiring the researcher to detach themselves from drawing conclusions and or biases (Van Manen, 2016). The researcher in hermeneutics aims to create a deeper narrative of the phenomenon in focus, uncovering the recounts of the participants rather than giving precise scrutiny of the participants' illustrations (Hein & Austin, 2001).

Empirical phenomenology focuses on preserving the stance of the studied group delving into their connotations before the researcher's interpretations (Aspers, 2009). Descriptive phenomenology, also known as transcendental, requires researchers to find commonalities in the recounts into patterns and themes to inform understanding of the phenomenon (Burkholder, 2016). In interpretative phenomenology, the researcher investigates the sociological and psychological factors that informed the participants responses (Burkholder, 2016).

Phenomenology involves the collection and analysis of perceptions that are associated with defined events and experiences (Burkholder, 2016). The goal of phenomenology was to assist in understanding human factors as intricate in an experience (Burkholder, 2016). Phenomenology involved efforts to make meanings of direct reflections (Friesen et al., 2009) and thematically looking to make sense out of data and essentials from participants (Miles et al., 2014). Hermeneutic phenomenology was the best approach for my research study to gain understanding of the lived experiences of research participants. The use of in-depth interviews for this study was important to have a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). I was able to

interview participants to gain insights into unadulterated recounts of firsthand information on the research phenomenon.

Role of the Researcher

According to Maxwell (2013), the researcher is the instrument in qualitative methods. The researcher gathers, organizes, and analyzes the experiences gathered from people's perceptions (Burkholder, 2016). It was important to avoid biases such as personal beliefs, perceptions, and my professional role during the collection of data and the analysis process. I engaged in open-ended interview questions in the study which brought forth original elucidation of the lived experiences of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management policies in the diversified workforce.

As the interviewer, further clarification was needed to aid in better understanding the description of the participants when needed. The interview process was conducted to uphold the ethical standards of the guidelines in research of Walden University to minimize personal biases during the data collection stage. All research participants were treated with respect and their shared lived experiences valued and used for the intended study purposes.

Methodology

Hermeneutic phenomenology was used for this study in contextualizing and amplifying the research study with attention to detailed experiential narratives of inclusion management by senior managers. I addressed the research gap in knowledge in the discipline that the study addressed is the lack of understanding of the role of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies to foster

employee engagement. Despite workplace inclusion being beneficial to positive organizational outcomes, previous studies did not reflect the role of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs on the outcomes of employee performance (Murison & Game-Lopata, 2021).

My goal was to better understand and identify practical perceptiveness lacking in current scholarly research to inform the implementation of inclusion management policies and concepts. Jelaca et al. (2020) provided the theoretical framework of the research outlining previous research findings and overlaying the foundation for an in-depth look on the phenomenon. Kundu et al. (2020) offered workforce diversity and organizational performance.

The use of a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study was to better understand the lived experiences of 15 senior managers, or until saturation was reached, in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies in the New York City transportation industry. This sample size was needed to reach saturation. Over the years, theories have been predictive of the impact made by the examination of diversity research in organizations and continues to challenge inclusive outcomes (Martin, 2022).

The use of in-depth interviews for this study was important to have a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Hermeneutic phenomenological research focuses on exploring detailed accounts of lived experiences which could otherwise be taken for granted to create a better understanding (Laverty, 2003). The words and phrases that reflect the lived experiences of participants in a unique way will present the story from different perspectives (Patton 2015).

Participant Selection Logic

The study sample consisted of 17 senior manager participants from the New York transportation industry who have the responsibility of collaborating with diverse teams in implementing inclusion management policies in achieving organizational business goals. Additionally, I focused on the lived experiences of senior managers who have had diversity and inclusion management knowledge and training to contribute to their company's overall performance. The sampling technique used for this study was purposeful sampling, criteria-based samples, and knowledge samples (see Palinkas et al., 2015). For the purposes of this research study, there was the need to engage with participants who were aware of inclusion management concepts and have experience in implementing those concepts in a diversified work environment. Participants were drawn from a pool of senior managers from the New York transportation industry via LinkedIn advanced search options and the EEO office. The following parameters were used in the selection process: the research participants (a) have been a senior manager for 5 years or more, (b) has managed a diverse team, (c) is aware of diversity and inclusion management concepts, and (d) has had a direct diverse team performance to benefit the organization. The participation process was voluntary and the managers selected gave their consent to partake in the interview.

Each of the prospective candidates was contacted by phone and via email depending on their preference as was indicated in the invitation letter response (Appendix A) or through a referral from my network. A copy of the study overview and consent form were sent to selected participants who best fit the study criteria. They were

then scheduled for an hour interview. The sample size may have to be increased in the case where there was the need for an in-depth study or may be reduced when saturation is reached in the study (Burkholder, 2016). The data collected were analyzed after each interview to ascertain the need for additional participants, if saturation had been reached, or for the incidence of redundancy.

Instrumentation

Appendix B provides an outline of the interview protocol for this study. This is a developed instrument based on literature with references from my general research question for my study. The questions were carefully designed to facilitate a deep discussion format. The interviews were conducted with the use of a technology-enabled video conferencing tool such as Zoom and our speakerphone. In circumstances where necessary, an interview questionnaire was sent to participants to complete and return with the option to seek further clarification where needed.

According to Stein and Sim (2020), technology plays a vital role in today's qualitative research. However, face-to-face interview processes enabled me to directly connect with the participants actions and reactions such as body language, and gestures of the respondents. This allowed for follow-up questions to further probe into the line of questioning to establish an in-depth inquiry. In the case where a face-to-face interview process was not possible, the alternative was considered. Although there were ethical concerns on privacy, trust, ownership and authenticity, the use of online data collection processes was considered if needed.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with the use of a suggested interview protocol for instrument validation. The identified interview protocol was projected to be adequate to answer the research question: What are the lived experiences of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies which support inclusive management? The pilot's study helped to set up adequacy. Prior to any field work, doctoral candidates are expected to follow the ethical standards and procedures as outlined by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

It was imperative for the researcher to provide details of the data collection to the IRB beforehand for approval. IRB's ethics approval number for this study was 06-17-24-0675979. Two managers who meet the research criteria via personal network and connections on LinkedIn, for ease and to avoid the likelihood of engaging the same participants in the main study were recruited. Participant's request incorporated the nature of the study and outlined the requirements of the participants and the researcher's expectations. The objective of the pilot study was to ascertain whether the listed interview questions will bring about the rich feedback required for this query (Tracy, 2019).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The research participants were scheduled to either sit with the researcher in a face-to-face meeting and or via technological tools that allow visual and auditory communication connecting the parties. The study overview and the participant consent forms were included in the sample questions to help participants mentally prepare for the

interview session. The interview was expected to be conversational and in a relaxed environment. There was the use of open-ended questions and follow-up questions for further probing to finish data collection regarding the lived experiences of senior managers in implementing inclusion management programs in a diversified workforce.

The interview questions were recorded along with their responses, and follow-up interactions with a digital voice recorder device or the available online teleconferencing features. Follow-up questions shall be documented as they arise, and as a reminder for further questioning (Tracy 2019). These were transcribed of all physical notes taken together with recordings to aid in reviewing and comparing the process of data analysis. Written consent was requested to reach out to participants with follow-up questions when the need arises for clarifications.

Although data collection methods varied, the skills needed to fully be present in an interview were the same. Interviews are conducted to uncover where observation may not be sufficient (Yin, 2017). Feelings, intentions, and thoughts cannot be observed, they can only be expressed. Therefore, it takes expertise in rapport building, being impartial, showing interest without being assertive, and being genuine and dependable. There is a presumption that interview respondents have the interest to freely share their knowledge of the research phenomenon (Burkholder, 2016).

Data Analysis Plan

The purpose of the interview questions was to evoke discernment about the research question for this study, which is: What are the lived experiences of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies which

support inclusive management? This research question emanated from wanting to ascertain the lived experiences of senior managers efforts in the quest to further contribute to the policies and strategies used by organizations to foster inclusion management and optimizing employee performance. The use of in-depth interviews for this study was important to have a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Hermeneutic phenomenological research focuses on exploring detailed accounts of lived experiences which could otherwise be taken for granted to create a better understanding (Laverly, 2003). The words and phrases that reflected the lived experiences of participants in a unique way will present the story from different perspectives (Seebeck & Vetter, 2022).

Concept coding will be used for this study for finding levels of meaning and analyzing data collected in words and short phrases (Saldana, 2016). NVivo coding was used to assist in making meanings out of the raw data. Using NVivo as a first choice First, NVivo possessed all the characteristics that were needed for qualitative data analysis. NVivo was used to triangulate data responses from collected data and incorporated both spreadsheet and in-depth text queries with robust auto coding which was very practical with large interview data.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Personal biases as a human resource practitioner and a management analyst over the past few years in a diversified environment have been identified and addressed. In

qualitative research, indicators of validity differ from that of quantitative research. The researcher has the task of proving scholarly thoroughness and data integrity for readers of the research; mostly realized through detailed descriptions of the research journey. Detailed descriptions enable the reader to embark on the same journey to find the encounters of the researcher through data collection and coding process to arrive at the same conclusion as the researcher.

Methodological and imperative validities are a demonstration of the credibility of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). There was an illustration of valid methodology by writing a detailed description outlining the steps and reasons behind the process of the study. Validity checklist as outlined by (Maxwell, 2013) to make sure that all the components of thoroughness were reached for the study were followed. With the use of interpretive validity, and assistance from professional associates helped in reviewing interview transcripts for themes and discoveries as needed. Furthermore, it was imperative to implore member checking and data triangulation as additional methods of credibility.

Transferability

According to Miles et al. (2014), the following were considered as factors of qualitative research enquiry of transferability or external validity: (a) the full description of people, settings, the background of permitted comparisons and processes, (b) descriptions of the findings for readers to access the transferability possibility, and (c) giving the readers a variety of outcomes that are consistent with their personal experiences. For this consideration, the study was conducted with senior managers in the

various departments in the transportation industry with varying or similar structures in management. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2016), the results of the study did not provide an assurance for the generalization of the data; but supported the possibility of findings that are consistent to the application of similar circumstances.

Research in recent years on diversity management in the workplace has not focused on inclusion management concepts and the role played by senior managers in achieving this phenomenon. The focus of my study was to better understand the lived experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies in the transportation industry. According to Madera et al. (2017), there is an increase in research interest amongst both practitioners and scholarly researchers on how manager's attitudes benefit the programs of diversity and inclusion management. Detailed accounts of the research components with the use of skills such as member checking to verify that my interpretation was valid and transferable will be used.

Dependability

The researcher was required to ensure the application of consistency and stability throughout the study to establish dependability in the qualitative research approach. In this study, purposeful sampling technique was used to establish a formidable participation criterion. The intended use of practices that have been evaluated to guarantee the capturing of lived experiences and expressions of participants for this study. When possible, these practices may include face-to-face interviews, semi structured interviews, open-ended questions, and a digital audio recording device. There was well-defined audit

tracking, use member checking events, and detailed records of the whole study procedures. This was to ensure a dependable check against the researcher's biases and to provide confirmation of logical conclusions reached that are dependable, transparent, and logical.

Confirmability

The research findings were related directly to the collected data free from the researchers' biases. The readers' confidence is essential for ensuring the research is free from the researcher's bias and subjectivity and not the grounds of the research findings. The validity of phenomenological studies was dependent on the innovation of the research findings and the reliability of the explanatory processes (Miles et al., 2014). A detailed account of processes and aid the reader in understanding my research findings was given.

The following considerations were provided by Miles et al. (2014) to ensure confirmability: (a) a thorough description of procedures and methods, (b) the order of data collection can be emulated, and (c) self-awareness of researcher's biases and self-doubt to cope with biases. These considerations were adhered to diligently.

Ethical Procedures

One of the most principal elements of data collection is the integrity of the study, including safety and ethically managing research participants. Prior to any field work, doctoral candidates were expected to follow the ethical standards and procedures as outlined by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). It was imperative that the researcher

provide detailed data collection to the IRB beforehand for approval. IRB's ethics approval number for this study was 06-17-24-0675979.

Traditionally, ethical issues only include face-to-face environments, however, now ethical issues also include virtual spaces. The use of technology is in line with the guidelines of the national IRB, international laws, and regulations (Sugiura et al., 2016). As part of the data collection process, emails, phone calls, and the use of social media were necessary for the purposes of collecting data with all IRB protocols observed. All the requirements of virtual presence as if it were that of a face-to-face space were upheld. It was important to show ethical responsibility aimed at equipping participants with detailed information to inform knowledge and understanding of their major part of the study (Yin, 2017; Sugiura et al., 2016).

Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any point in time and their choice of complete anonymity and confidentiality. Consent was sought prior to the interview session and all data collected will be treated with strict ethical procedures and code. Participants were also informed of their rights to respond to all or some questions where they deem fit. In the quest to conceal identities for privacy and anonymity concerns, participants were quoted in a manner that did not reveal their identities, while maintaining their individual responses, stories, and experiences (Sugiura et al., 2016).

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative, hermeneutic phenomenological study was to better understand the lived experiences of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies. Managing inclusion is essential in

managing teams in diverse workplaces. This hermeneutic phenomenological study also helped in contextualizing and amplifying the research study with attention to detailed experiential narratives of inclusion management by senior managers. These unique experiences added to the knowledge of inclusion management policies and programs to inform scholarly understanding. The proposed research participants' population were non-administrative senior managers with well-defined performance measures.

The role of the researcher was to interview and interpret the responses to tailored questions. Research participants were recruited from senior managers in the transportation industry with five or more years of managerial experience. Semi-structured interviews and open-ended interview protocols intended to encapsulate a detailed report of the lived experiences of the phenomenon, describing moments, and giving anecdotal accounts of events experienced were used. Trustworthiness was the subject of concentration at each stage to safeguard credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research.

In Chapter 4, deliberations on pilot study, setting, demographics, data collection, the data analysis process, strategies to ensure trustworthiness, and a summary of the findings were made.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of 17 senior managers in the New York transportation industry in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies in the New York transportation industry. This research was unique because it contributed to the understanding of how the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies foster employee engagement. This hermeneutic phenomenological approach helped me in contextualizing and amplifying the research study with attention to detailed experiential narratives of inclusion management by senior managers.

These unique experiences added to the knowledge of inclusion management policies and programs to inform scholarly understanding. I employed the use of semi structured interviews to encapsulate a detailed report of the lived experiences of the phenomenon, describing moments and giving anecdotal accounts of events experienced while managing diversity and inclusion as managers. I also explored how senior managers use their managerial skills to build diverse working teams in efforts of determining ways to implement inclusion management programs and policies to foster employee engagement.

Research Question

The guiding question for this research study was “What are the lived experiences of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies which support employee engagement?”

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with the use of a suggested interview protocol for instrument validation. The identified interview protocol was projected to be adequate to answer the research question. The pilot's study helped me to set up adequacy. Two managers who meet the research criteria via personal network and connections on LinkedIn, for ease and to avoid the likelihood of engaging the same participants in the main study, were recruited. Participant requests incorporated the nature of the study and outlined the requirements of the participants and my expectations. The objective of the pilot study was to ascertain whether the listed interview questions will bring about the rich feedback required for this query (see Tracy, 2019).

The pilot study enabled me to include convenience to accommodate the participants' timings and scheduled meetings ahead of time with room for changes. The pilot study proved to validate the research questions and to capture the responses for participants by using follow up questions and seeking for participants to elaborate by asking questions like "Can you elaborate on this? Can you give me an example?" Also, through pilot study I was able to establish a means of making the participants feel free and provide a relaxing environment to encourage them to share real life experiences as it pertains to the research study and questions. IRB's ethics approval number for this study was 06-17-24-0675979.

Research Setting

The setting of the interviews was via face-to-face and tele video conferencing and audio recordings depending on the preference of the interviewees. I allowed for changes

in preferences to accommodate the busy schedules of the participants. I provided a relaxing environment and anonymous context for the interviewees to feel comfortable and help them engage and connect to the interview questions. Participants were drawn from a pool of senior managers from the New York transportation industry via LinkedIn advanced search options and referrals. The following parameters were used in the selection process: the research participants (a) have been a senior manager for 5 years or more, (b) have managed a diverse team, (c) are aware of diversity and inclusion management concepts, and (d) have had a direct diverse team performance to benefit the organization.

The participation process was voluntary and the managers selected gave their consent to partake in the interview. The use of in-depth interviews for this study was important to develop a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon (see Moustakas, 1994). Hermeneutic phenomenological research focuses on exploring detailed accounts of lived experiences which could otherwise be taken for granted to create a better understanding (Laverty, 2003). The words and phrases that reflected the lived experiences of participants in a unique way present the story from different perspectives (see Seebeck & Vetter, 2022).

The interview procedure, methods, and duration were thoroughly explained to the participants. Recruitment letters were sent to interested and prospective participants (see Appendix A). The consent forms were also explained, and consent affirmed by all participants by responding “yes” to the audio recording when I asked, “do you agree to be interviewed for this study?” The data collected were analyzed after each interview to

ascertain the need for additional participants, if saturation has been reached, or for the incidence of redundancy.

Participants were informed of the voluntary nature of the study and their ability to change their minds even after they have consented to partake in the study. They were also informed and assured of the privacy nature of the study, and that the information will be kept confidential by password protection for up to 5 years by which they saved data will be permanently destroyed. They were informed of IRB's approval and the study number for this study as well as providing Walden University's Research Participants Advocates number.

All the interviews were conducted in a private, safe, and relaxing environment with no evidence of prolonged distraction, participants' fatigue and prolonged interruptions. The interviews were each slotted for a period of 30-60 minutes; however, they were informed that they could end the interview at any time they deemed fit and could answer all or skip some of the interview questions. All the participants, however, answered all 10 interview questions.

Demographics

Each participant was in the New York transportation industry. The participants met the following parameters were be used in the selection process: the research participants (a) have been a senior manager for 5 years or more, (b) have managed a diverse team, (c)are aware of diversity and inclusion management concepts, and (d) have had a direct diverse team performance to benefit the organization. The demographics for this study were participants age, gender, ethnic background, number of years as a senior

manager, and the average number of hours worked daily or weekly (see Table 1).

Participants were identified by alpha numeric characters.

Table 1*Participant Demographics*

Participant	Age	Gender	Ethnic Background	Years as Senior Manager	Average hours worked
Participant 1	50s	Male	Hispanic & Italian	5	45-50 Weekly
Participant 2	40s	Male	American	6	35-45 Weekly
Participant 3	40s	Male	White	10	45 Weekly
Participant 4	40s	Male	Hispanic	7	45-50 Weekly
Participant 5	50s	Male	Northern Southern European	8	50-55 Weekly
Participant 6	50s	Female	Russian	9	40 Weekly
Participant 7	50s	Male	African American & Latino	20	45 Weekly
Participant 8	50s	Male	African American	20	40 Weekly
Participant 9	40s	Male	Black Caribbean	7	40 Weekly
Participant 10	50s	Male	African American	10	45 Weekly
Participant 11	60s	Female	African American	19	40 Weekly
Participant 12	50s	Male	African American	12	40-50 Weekly
Participant 13	50s	Female	African American	13	50 Weekly
Participant 14	50s	Male	African American	12	40-45 Weekly
Participant 15	50s	Male	Hispanic & Italian Puerto Rican & African	14	40-45 Weekly
Participant 16	40s	Male	American	8	40-60 Weekly
Participant 17	50s	Male	African American	12	40 Weekly

Data Collection

The Walden University's IRB ethics approval number for this qualitative study is 06-17-24-0675979 with an expiration date of June 16, 2025. All research participants were required to consent to the research study prior to the data collection and affirmed their consent prior to the interview recordings. The first interview was conducted on June 21, 2024, and ended on July 25, 2024. The data collected consisted of 10 open ended interview questions structured to capture all data needed for saturation and to answer the research question.

The use of in-depth interviews for this study was important to have a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon (see Moustakas, 1994). Hermeneutic phenomenological research focuses on exploring detailed accounts of lived experiences which could otherwise be taken for granted to create a better understanding (Lavery, 2003). The words and phrases that reflected the lived experiences of participants in a unique way will present the story from different perspectives (see Seebeck & Vetter, 2022).

Initial Contact

Upon receipt of my IRB approval, I began reaching out to potential participants using social media, specifically LinkedIn and my professional contacts to canvas for those who fit the research participants criterion specifically: (a) have been a senior manager for 5 years or more, (b) have managed a diverse team, (c) are aware of diversity and inclusion management concepts, and (d) have had a direct diverse team performance

to benefit the organization. I initially sent out 23 invitations and received 10 responses in the first set. Over time, a total of 17 responses were received and analyzed.

Interview invitations were sent out and as the positive responses started coming in, I reached out to them via phone call to schedule interview dates with flexibility to reschedule if necessary. The consent forms specified all the requirements from the IRB which included the interview protocol which stated the number of participants as not exceeding 20 about their work and audio-recording their responses. Recruitment continued until I reached 17 participants.

Interviews

I began the interview process by scheduling a convenient time in accordance with the participants preference as approved by the IRB. I used a mixture of Zoom audio which is a mode of communicating which allows for end-to-end communication between two or more parties securely, telephone calls and face-to-face methods. According to Gray et al., (2020), Zoom allows for an enabling private environment for the use of the researcher to employ participants who due to distant or remote locations, may not be physically present for an interview. The use of Zoom in data collection replicates and eliminates contextual information from engaging in the interview process with an unbiased atmosphere (Gary et al., 2020). This helped to create a more flexible and personal engagement environment resulting in the participants' relaxed environment for engagement.

I began each interview session regardless of the mode of communication used by first thanking precipitants for agreeing to participate in my study. I proceeded to read the

consent form to them and requiring them to respond “yes” for the recording when asked “Do you agree to be interviewed for this study?” as required by IRB. This was done consistently with all the 17 participants. Due to the interactive nature of the interview, I was able to follow up questions to further encourage them to provide in-depth explanations to shorter answers.

Data Analysis

The analysis of inclusion and diversity in the workplace was conducted using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software, facilitating a comprehensive examination of data collected from 17 interviewees. The process commenced with familiarization, involving an in-depth review of interview transcripts and relevant documents to capture the context and nuances of participants' experiences and perspectives. The data were then imported into NVivo 14 for systematic coding, beginning with open coding to capture a broad range of themes without pre-established categories. As the analysis progressed, patterns and relationships within the data emerged, identifying twelve primary themes and multiple subthemes.

These themes include understanding inclusion and diversity, the benefits of inclusion and diversity, the impact of diversity and inclusion on organizational goals, the effects of diversity on employee engagement, how inclusion affects employee engagement, awareness of inclusion management policies, the influence of implementing inclusion management policies on creating an inclusive climate, the role of policies in creating an inclusive environment, recommendations for building and sustaining inclusion management policies, challenges to inclusion, factors influencing the creation

of an inclusive climate in the work environment, and practical challenges and compliance. Tables 2-5 provide examples of the coding, found themes and subthemes, and sample quotes from participants.

Table 2*Coding and Subtheme Examples*

Subtheme	Sample quotes	Number of interviewees
Enhanced Workplace Respect	"Everyone feels comfortable in their work environment..." (P1) "Accommodating cultural and religious practices increases their commitment and productivity..." (P3)	4
Improved Hiring Practices	"We must have a set of candidates... it forces you to think about who you are hiring." (P3) "The panel must be judged as diverse... we record more information than we've had previously." (P5)	3
Minimal Impact on Daily Work	"I don't feel like they influence the way I work..." (P2) "At my current agency... there was a lot of inclusion and always discussions on how to improve." (P11)	3
Career Advancement	"ERGs provide another connection point for employees with the organization." (P3) "Creating mentoring programs... is not work that can be done without intentionality." (P9)	2
Sense of Belonging	"ERGs engage employees with the organization and each other." (P3) "It is important to ensure that employees feel included and valued in the workplace." (P9)	2
Enhanced Problem-Solving and Innovation	"Valuable information from different backgrounds improves products." (P10) "Inclusion gives you a much better perspective on how things should be done." (P3)	4
Improved Employee Engagement and Productivity	"If people do not feel included, they will disengage from the assignment." (P13) "If your employees feel included, they feel invested and are more likely to succeed." (P5)	4

Subtheme	Sample quotes	Number of interviewees
Better Community Representation and Service Delivery	"Our workforce reflects the neighborhood's diversity." (P1)	4
	"Having a staff that encompasses all customers increases the probability of addressing their needs." (P8)	
Equity and Fair Representation	"Not every community has the same opportunities or access." (P7)	2
	"Diversity is a hot topic across many industries." (P8)	
Long-term Organizational Success	"Companies embracing a diverse workforce are more creative." (P9)	2
	"A diverse workforce can benefit the organization in the market." (P9)	
Influence on Goal Achievement	"Lack of diversity affects achieving goals." (P13)	2
	"A diverse workforce helps with goal organization, like reducing budgets." (P6)	
Practicality in Workforce Decisions	"Decisions are made to avoid being heavy on one gender or race." (P4)	1
Specific Skill Set Integration	"Diversity impacts HR goals but not operational goals." (P5)	1
	"Diversity in employees helps with financial goals and expertise." (P6)	
Enhancing Team Cohesion	"TED programs improve collaboration and cohesion in the organization." (P1)	2
	"Diversity and inclusion bring diverse ideas into goal setting." (P10)	
Diverse Perspectives and Stronger Solutions	"More points of view lead to stronger solutions." (P2)	2
	"Focusing too much on diversity may distract from achieving goals." (P3)	
Representation and Skills Integration	"Diversity brings different skills and knowledge to work together." (P11)	2
	"Choosing candidates with varied experience enhances operations." (P12)	

Table 3*Category and Subtheme Examples*

Category	Subtheme	Sample quote	Number of Interviewees Supported
Sense of Community and Belonging	Visibility of Diverse Groups	"Seeing a reflection of themselves in other employees brings a sense of community and confidence to groups who have felt marginalized." (Interviewee P1)	2
	Accommodating Religious Practices	"I respect their times of prayer and their times to go to services... it has not taken away from the amount of work they do." (Interviewee P2)	2
Inclusive Leadership and Representation	Inadequate Representation in Leadership	"The operation is run by a small 10% of Caucasians, missing the mark of inclusion at the top." (Interviewee P10)	2
	Fear of Sharing Ideas	"Most employees are timid because they fear their ideas are not respected, leading to high turnover." (Interviewee P11)	2

Table 4*Themes 1-7 and Sample Quotes*

Theme	Subtheme	Sample quote
Theme 1: Understanding of inclusion and diversity	Inclusive Hiring and Team Composition	"Consider people for a position regardless of their background as it relates to their gender or race" (P12).
		"Having your human or labor resources have a wide range of backgrounds and demographics allows them to share a wide range of skills and talents in the organization" (P5).
	Valuing and respecting diverse perspectives	"Inclusion means everyone is included" (P11) "Intentional effort to make sure that different types of people and different types of viewpoints are included" (P3)
Theme 2: Benefits of inclusive and diversity	Enhanced workplace respect	"We are more responsible to ensure that everyone feels comfortable in their work environment, and everyone knows they can flourish" (P1)

Theme	Subtheme	Sample quote
	Improved hiring practices	"Accommodating cultural and religious practices... increases their commitment and productivity..." (P3)
	Minimal impact on daily work	"I don't really feel like they influence the way that I work because I generally try to be a welcoming and open-minded person..." (P2)
	Career advancement	"ERGs provide another connection point where the employees build a relationship with the organization they work for."(P3)
	Sense of belonging	"It is important to ensure that employees feel included and valued in the workplace." (P9)
	Enhanced Problem-solving and Innovation	"Obtaining valuable information from different backgrounds to assess and to deliver a better product in a given environment" (P10) "If people do not feel included, they are going to actively disengage from the assignment and give you the bare minimum" (P13)

Theme	Subtheme	Sample quote
	Improved employee engagement and productivity	"Having a staff or workforce that encompasses all of your customers will definitely increase the probability that you would be able to address their specific needs" (P8)
	Better community representation and service delivery	"Not every community has the same opportunity and that every community doesn't have the same access so how do you find something that's equitable?" (P7) "You could easily argue that having a diverse workforce can benefit you so you can actually benefit from the market." (P9)
	Equity and fair representation	"If you lack diversity and inclusion, it's evident by numbers, it's evident by percentages its evident by whatever goals you are trying to achieve." (P13)
	Long-term organizational success	"Sometimes we are made to make certain decisions based on previous decisions so we're not heavy on one gender or one race or one culture." (P4)
	Influence on goal achievement	

Theme	Subtheme	Sample quote
	Practically in workforce decisions	“ If you have a diverse Employees in your organization it will help with the organization of goals like I said again if we our goal is financial reduce budget we would like to bring in include people with that experience from private sector from different financial organizations." (P6)
	Specific skill set integration	
Theme 3: How diversity and inclusion affect organizational goals	Enhancing team cohesion	“Diversity and inclusion affect organizational goals in a manner of allowing and including diverse ideas in the construction of goal setting." (P10)
	Diverse perspectives and stronger solutions	“If you have more points of view, you can actually have very strong outcomes to solutions to your problems." (P2)
	Representation and skills integration	“Diversity and inclusion could affect organizational goals if everybody from the different backgrounds bring the different parts be it experience or

Theme	Subtheme	Sample quote
Theme 4: How diversity affects employee engagement		ethnicity or array of skills and knowledge to work together." (P11)
	Breaking stereotypes	" Nowadays is a more direct engagement looking at interpersonal skills." (P1).
	Interpersonal skills	"Nowadays is a more direct engagement actually looking at interpersonal skills rather than just assumptions made prior to actually engaging in employee." (P1)
	Recognition of different backgrounds	"The importance is having everyone feel valued because that will continue to bring people back to the table and keep engaged." (P10)
		"Diversity affects engagement because when a group of people do not feel heard they do not feel valued." (P10)
	Employee retention	"Creating mentoring programs, coaching programs... is not work that can be done without intentionality." (P9)

Theme	Subtheme	Sample quote
Theme 5: How inclusion affect employee engagement	Visibility of diverse groups	<p>“Individuals who were a smaller minority at some points are seeing more a reflection of themselves in other employees. I think it brings that sense of community; it brings individuals more confidence to certain groups who have felt marginalized in the past to see more of themselves in the same arena.” (P1)</p>
	Accommodating religious practices	<p>" I've seen that accommodating cultural and religious practices, like allowing time off for religious holidays or creating prayer spaces, not only makes employees feel respected and valued but also increases their commitment and productivity. It's a win-win situation for both the organization and the employees." (P3)</p>
	Inadequate representation in leadership	<p>" In our company, the leadership positions are predominantly occupied by a small group, mostly Caucasian males." (P11)</p>

Theme	Subtheme	Sample quote
	Fear of sharing ideas	" In my experience, employees often hold back their ideas because they fear they will be dismissed or ignored. This creates a culture where only the loudest voices are heard, which can stifle innovation and employee engagement."(P12)
	Creating a comfortable space	"A positive work environment where employees feel comfortable and valued is crucial. When employees have common ground with their colleagues and feel included, it fosters a sense of belonging and boosts overall morale." (P5)
	Round table discussions	As we have held in the past year employee round tables, we have some of the hourly positions coming on board about groups of 20 to 40 sitting around the table to engage managers and supervisors. They feel included that they can say anything if they are professional and respectful, they tell us about their

Theme	Subtheme	Sample quote
		experiences so that they can better manage this operation and better give the tools that they need." (P5)
	Trust and ethical management	"When management acts ethically and transparently, it fosters trust among employees. This trust is essential for creating an engaged and motivated workforce." (P8)
	Autonomy in work	"Giving employees autonomy in their tasks not only boosts their engagement but also enhances their sense of ownership and responsibility towards their work. It's crucial for their professional growth and the overall success of the organization." (P7)
Theme 6: Awareness of the inclusion management policies	Awareness and understanding of inclusion policies	"We are all aware of our inclusion policies and we do try to ensure that every level is aware of inclusion policy..." is aware of inclusion policy..." (P1).

Theme	Subtheme	Sample quote
Theme 7: The influence of implementation	Opportunities for improvement	" If the inclusion management policies were clearer and more enforced... better communication and training could address these issues." (P8).
	Setting the tone from the top	"The easy answer here is it comes from the top... you want to have the head of the organization really setting the tone." (P1)
	Open Mindedness	"I think that my open-mindedness and my ability to treat people as people... I take quick actions " (P2)
	People-Centric approach	"What influences the climate is the people, when you have employees who are people centric." (P10)
	Training and knowledge sharing	"More training issue or creating the policies where you actually have to document and pass that knowledge to all the Newcomers " (P6)
		"I would say communication on the matter and education, educate people who don't know." (P11)

Theme	Subtheme	Sample quote
	Effective communication	<p>“Involving employees in decision-making processes to foster a sense of belonging.</p>
	Employee engagement	<p>If you feel valued and respected... people will be included." (P9)</p>
		<p>“Just being open to new ideas that are not past practice." (P12)</p>
		<p>“Situations influence inclusion... depending on what needs to be done..."</p>
	Organizational Culture	(P13)

Table 5*Themes 8-11 and Sample Quotes*

Theme	Subtheme	Sample quote
Theme 8: The Role of Policies in Creating an Inclusive Climate	Policies Provide a Framework	"Policies provide a guide, with flexibility for managers to make the right decisions." (P3)
	Natural Integration and Inclusivity	"Inclusion is ensured even without being a catchphrase during meetings." (P1)
	Practical Challenges and Compliance	"Implementation often sits on those in policy-making positions." (P10)
	Cultural Shift from Compliance to Embracing Diversity	"Senior managers are focusing more on what individuals bring to the position." (P3)
	Representation and Visibility	"Inclusion is shown through the diversity in leadership roles." (P13)
	Need for Broader Vision and Awareness	"Senior management needs to consider everyone from their backgrounds." (P12)

Theme	Subtheme	Sample quote
	Training and Communication	"Senior managers must lead by example and ensure the message gets out." (P6)
	Inclusivity in Decision-Making and Operations	"A policy framework is essential, but managers need flexibility to act." (P3)
Theme 9: Recommendations for Building and Sustaining Inclusion Management Policies	Balanced Inclusion Efforts	"We need to find a middle ground to make everyone feel included." (P3)
	Continuous Policy Review and Engagement	"Regular reviews and employee engagement are essential." (P4)
	Education and Training	"Ongoing education and interactive learning are crucial for maintaining inclusion." (P2)
	Communication and Feedback	"Open communication and acting on feedback ensure inclusion efforts meet employees' needs." (P6)
Theme 10: Challenges	Perception of Inclusion as Superficial	"It will be heavy at the top or just a façade, not everyone is represented." (P11)

Theme	Subtheme	Sample quote
Theme 11: Factors Influencing the Creation of an Inclusion Climate in the Work Environment	Resistance to Change and Old Practices	"We need to set new goals and improve old practices to meet organizational needs." (P10)
	Political and Social Context	"The polarized political environment affects organizational inclusion." (P1)
	Lack of Representation	"Lack of representation in upper management can be problematic." (P11)
	Miscommunication and Cultural Barriers	"Breaks in communication can create problems when leaders can't relate to the workforce." (P7)
	Leadership and Management Policies	"Leadership has to set the tone because attitude reflects leadership." (P7)
	Cultural and Societal Norms	"Political environment influences societal norms that permeate to organizational levels." (P1)
	Communication and Education	"Education and communication are crucial to understanding and growing inclusion." (P11)

Theme	Subtheme	Sample quote
	Personal and Organizational Attitudes	"A people-centric approach influences the climate positively." (P10)
	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Policies	"DEI policies create the environment necessary for inclusion." (P15)

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Personal biases as a human resource practitioner and a management analyst over the past few years in a diversified environment were identified and addressed. In qualitative research, indicators of validity differ from that of quantitative research. As a researcher, I had the task of proving scholarly thoroughness and data integrity for readers of the research; mostly realized through detailed descriptions of the research journey. Detailed descriptions enable the reader to embark on the same journey to find the encounters of the researcher through data collection and coding process to arrive at the same conclusion as the researcher.

Methodological and imperative validities were demonstrated as part of the credibility of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). There was an illustration of valid methodology by writing a detailed description outlining the steps and reasons behind the process of the study. Validity checklist as outlined by (Maxwell, 2013) to make sure that all the components of thoroughness are reached for the study was followed. With the use

of interpretive validity, and assistance from professional associates helped in reviewing interview transcripts for themes and discoveries as needed. Furthermore, it was imperative to utilize member checking and data triangulation as additional methods of credibility.

Transferability

According to Miles et al. (2014), the following were considered as factors of qualitative research enquiry of transferability or external validity: (a) the full description of people, settings, the background of permitted comparisons and processes, (b) descriptions of the findings for readers to access the transferability possibility, and (c) giving the readers a variety of outcomes that are consistent with their personal experiences. For this consideration, the study was conducted with senior managers in the various departments in the transportation industry with varying or similar structures in management.

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2016), the results of the study did not provide an assurance for the generalization of the data; but supported the possibility of findings that were consistent to the application of similar circumstances. Research in recent years on diversity management in the workplace has not focused on inclusion management concepts and the role played by senior managers in achieving this phenomenon.

The focus of my study was to better understand their lived experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies in the transportation industry. According to Madera

et al. (2017), there was an increase in research interest among both practitioners and scholarly researchers on how manager's attitudes benefit the programs of diversity and inclusion management. Detailed accounts of the research components with the use of skills such as member checking to verify that my interpretation was valid and transferable will be used.

Dependability

I was required as the researcher to ensure the application of consistency and stability throughout the study to establish dependability in the qualitative research approach. In this study, purposeful sampling technique was used to establish a formidable participation criterion. The intended use of practices that have been evaluated to guarantee the capturing of lived experiences and expressions of participants for this study.

When possible, these practices included face-to-face interviews, semi structured interviews, open-ended questions, and a digital audio recording device. There was well-defined audit tracking, use member checking events, and detailed records of the whole study procedures. This was to ensure a dependable check against the researcher's biases and to provide confirmation of logical conclusions reached that are dependable, transparent, and logical.

Confirmability

The research findings were related directly to the collected data free from the researchers' biases. The readers' confidence was essential for ensuring the research was free from the researcher's bias and subjectivity and not the grounds of the research

findings. The validity of phenomenological studies was dependent on the innovation of the research findings and the reliability of the explanatory processes (Miles et al., 2014). A detailed account of processes and aid the reader in understanding my research findings were given.

The following considerations were provided by Miles et al. (2014) to ensure confirmability: (a) a thorough description of procedures and methods, (b) the order of data collection can be emulated, and (c) self-awareness of researcher's biases and self-doubt to cope with biases. These considerations were adhered to diligently.

Study Results

The guiding question for this research study was: What are the lived experiences of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies which support employee engagement?

After analyzing the research data from the interviews, eleven themes emerged: Understanding of inclusion and diversity, benefits of inclusion and diversity, how diversity and inclusion affects organizational goals, how diversity affect employee engagement, how inclusion affect employee engagement, awareness if inclusion management policies, the influence of implementation of inclusion management policies on creating a climate of inclusion, the role of policies in creating an inclusive climate, challenges, factors influencing the creation of an inclusion climate in the work environment, recommendations for building and sustaining inclusion management policies.

Theme 1: Understanding of Inclusion and Diversity

The first theme that emerged from the analysis is the understanding of inclusion and diversity as an Inclusive Hiring and Team Composition and Valuing and Respecting Diverse Perspectives. Participants emphasized the importance of considering individuals for positions irrespective of their background, gender, or race. For instance, Participant 12 stated, "Consider people for a position regardless of their background as it relates to their gender or race." This perspective was echoed by Participant 5, who noted, "Having your human or labor resources have a wide range of backgrounds and demographics allows them to share a wide range of skills and talents in the organization."

The value of diversity in the workplace was further highlighted by Participant 13, who expressed, "I like to have various people working." Participant 14 elaborated on this by stating, "I think it's a diversity of all sorts of people from many backgrounds, all walks of life, genders, and age... I think that diversity and inclusion is more of how people blend." In addition to inclusive hiring, participants underscored the significance of valuing and respecting diverse perspectives within the workplace.

Participant 11 succinctly defined inclusion as, "Inclusion means everyone is included," highlighting the fundamental principle of ensuring that no one is excluded based on their background. Participant 3 added, "Intentional effort to make sure that different types of people and different types of viewpoints are included," This sentiment was further supported by Participant 7, who described inclusion as being "open-minded, considering and respecting other perspectives, and embracing something that you just don't know."

Theme 2: Benefits of Inclusion and Diversity

The analysis identified several key benefits of inclusion and diversity within the workplace, categorized the following benefits: Enhanced Workplace Respect, Improved Hiring Practices, Minimal Impact on Daily Work, Career Advancement, Sense of Belonging, Enhanced Problem-Solving and Innovation, Improved Employee Engagement and Productivity, Better Community Representation and Service Delivery, Equity and Fair Representation, Long-term Organizational Success, Influence on Goal Achievement, Practicality in Workforce Decisions, and Specific Skill Set Integration.

Enhanced Workplace Respect was frequently highlighted by participants, with one noting, "We are more responsible for ensuring that everyone feels comfortable in their work environment, and everyone knows they can flourish..." (P1), and another mentioning the accommodation of cultural and religious practices to increase commitment and productivity (P3). Improved Hiring Practices emerged as another significant benefit, with participants discussing the necessity of diverse hiring panels and the inclusion of various skill sets (P3, P5, P12).

Minimal Impact on Daily Work was noted by some participants who felt that their inclusive practices were already inherent in their work ethic (P2, P11, P9). Career Advancement opportunities were linked to intentional efforts in mentoring and coaching (P3, P9). The Sense of Belonging was emphasized through the role of Employee Resource Groups (P3, P9).

Another identified key was Enhanced Problem-Solving and Innovation were seen as benefits of drawing on diverse perspectives to deliver better products and solutions

(P10, P3, P7, P4). Improved Employee Engagement and Productivity were tied to feelings of inclusion and investment, leading to higher productivity and success (P13, P5, P2, P13). Better Community Representation and Service Delivery were noted as outcomes of a workforce reflecting the diversity of the community it serves (P1, P8, P9, P12). Equity and Fair Representation were highlighted as critical for ensuring all communities have access to opportunities (P7, P8).

Long-term organizational success is linked to the creativity and market benefits of a diverse workforce (P9). The Influence on Goal Achievement was evident, with diverse teams contributing to the success of organizational goals (P13, P6). Practicality in Workforce Decisions involves making balanced decisions to avoid bias towards any one group (P4). Lastly, Specific Skill Set Integration was seen to enhance operational goals by incorporating diverse experiences and skills (P6, P5) see table 1 below.

Theme 3: How Diversity and Inclusion Affect Organizational Goals

The third theme, How Diversity, and Inclusion Affect Organizational Goals, addresses the impact of diversity and inclusion on organizational performance through Enhancing Team Cohesion, which was brought by Interviewees P1 and P10. P1 observed, "The TED programs have brought more individuals awareness to themselves but within those groups the collaboration that goes on between these TED's brings a higher level of cohesion I believe to work organization. P10 further noted that diversity and inclusion contribute to a more inclusive approach to goal setting, thereby improving team cohesion.

Also, Diverse Perspectives and Stronger Solutions, was brought out by Interviewees P2 and P3. P2 remarked, "If you have more points of view, you can actually have very strong outcomes to solutions to your problems," Conversely, P3 highlighted a potential pitfall, stating that excessive focus on diversity and inclusion might detract from achieving broader organizational objectives.

Thirdly, Representation and Skills Integration was brought forth by Interviewees P11 and P12. P11 stated, "Diversity and inclusion could affect organizational goals if everybody from the different backgrounds bring the different parts be it experience or ethnicity or array of skills and knowledge to work together," P12 reinforced this view by noting, "If you want the team you going to choose several candidates with experience in different areas that can enhance your operation because everybody brings something different to the table."

Theme 4: How Diversity Affects Employee Engagement

Diversity impacts employee engagement in multiple ways, including through breaking stereotypes, enhancing interpersonal skills, recognizing diverse backgrounds, and promoting employee retention and innovation. Breaking stereotypes is a critical factor, as Participant P1 emphasizes that modern engagement strategies focus more on evaluating people skills rather than relying on preconceived assumptions about employees. This sentiment is echoed by Participant P11, who notes the challenges faced by upper management from diverse ethnic backgrounds, such as being shunned due to different accents or appearances.

People's skills also play a significant role in employee engagement. Participant P1 highlights that engagement today involves a deeper look at people's skills rather than assumptions, stressing the need for direct interactions. Participant P13 supports this by emphasizing the importance of inclusivity and involving everyone, suggesting that encouraging open, direct engagement among employees is crucial for a cohesive workplace. The recognition of diverse backgrounds further contributes to engagement. Participant P10 points out that valuing everyone's background is essential for maintaining their involvement and ensuring they feel valued. This is supported by Participant P3, who notes that collaborative efforts in a diverse team help solve problems and enhance processes, illustrating how diverse perspectives can lead to better outcomes.

Lastly, employee retention and innovation are significantly influenced by diversity. Participant P10 argues that engagement suffers when employees feel unheard and undervalued, highlighting the need for inclusive practices. This view is supported by Participant P9, who emphasizes that meaningful engagement requires intentional efforts. Participant P3 adds that Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are effective tools for fostering connections and enhancing employee engagement, highlighting how structured programs can drive both retention and innovation.

Theme 5: How Inclusion Affects Employee Engagement

Theme 5 explores how inclusion influences employee engagement through various categories. In Sense of Community and Belonging, the visibility of diverse groups plays a pivotal role. Participant P1 observes that when individuals see reflections of themselves among their colleagues, it fosters a greater sense of community and

confidence, particularly for those who have felt marginalized. This sentiment is echoed by Participant P7, who notes that seeing people who resemble them in influential roles can inspire and motivate employees, highlighting the importance of visible diversity in enhancing engagement and a sense of belonging.

Accommodating religious practices further supports this sense of community. Participant P2 emphasizes the positive impact of respecting employees' religious needs, such as allowing prayer times and accommodating religious holidays, on their overall engagement and productivity. This view is reinforced by Participant P3, who notes that such accommodation makes employees feel valued and respected, which in turn boosts their commitment to the organization.

In Inclusive Leadership and Representation, the issue of inadequate representation in leadership is critical. Participant P10 highlights a significant gap in leadership diversity, noting that the top positions are occupied by a homogeneous group, which reflects a broader issue of inclusivity at the highest levels of the organization. Participant P11 further supports this by pointing out that leadership roles are held by a small, uniform group, indicating a lack of diverse representation that can impact overall engagement and inclusion within the company.

The fear of sharing ideas also illustrates how the lack of inclusion affects employee engagement. Participant P11 describes how employees are hesitant to share their ideas due to concerns about not being respected, which leads to feelings of being unheard and affects engagement and increases turnover. This concern is echoed by

Participant P12, who points out that when only the loudest voices are heard, it can stifle innovation and disengage employees.

Theme 6: Awareness of Inclusion Management Policies

Theme 6, *Awareness of Inclusion Management Policies*, examines how well employees understand and are informed about inclusion policies and identify areas for improvement in communication and training. Interviewee P1 highlighted that there is a general awareness of inclusion policies within the organization, noting that efforts are made to ensure everyone is informed. Conversely, Interviewee P5 acknowledged the importance of inclusion policies, particularly from an HR perspective concerning hiring practices, suggesting that while there is recognition of the policies' importance, it may be limited to specific aspects.

Interviewee P13, however, admitted to a lack of awareness about the policies, stating, "I am not aware of the inclusion management policies of this company; I am sure they are there, but I have never looked it up."

Several interviewees identified opportunities for improvement to address these gaps.

Interviewee P6 suggested that enhancing communication and training on inclusion policies could be beneficial. Interviewee P8 echoed this sentiment, noting that improved communication and training would help ensure clearer and better-enforced policies.

Interviewee P7 also emphasized the need for consistent and comprehensive training sessions that focus on real-life scenarios and practical applications of inclusion policies. This points to the necessity for training that goes beyond theoretical knowledge, aiming to make policies more accessible and applicable in everyday work situations.

Theme 7: The Influence of Implementation of Inclusion Management Policies on Creating a Climate of Inclusion

Theme 7 examines the impact of inclusion management policies on fostering a climate of inclusion within organizations. Leadership plays a pivotal role, as emphasized by Interviewee P3, who highlighted that the commitment to inclusion must start from the top: "The easy answer here is it comes from the top... you want to have the head of the organization really setting the tone." This notion is supported by the necessity for open-mindedness among leaders and employees alike.

Interviewee P2 underscored the significance of treating individuals as equals and acting quickly to address issues, thereby fostering a culture of respect and inclusion. Furthermore, Interviewee P10 pointed out that a people-centric approach, where employees focus on valuing each other's contributions, is crucial for shaping an inclusive environment. Effective communication and comprehensive training also play essential roles in embedding inclusion policies into organizational practices.

Interviewee P6 stressed the need for thorough training and documentation to ensure that all employees, especially newcomers, are well-informed about inclusion policies. Effective communication is similarly critical, as noted by Interviewee P11, who advocated for educating employees to enhance their understanding of inclusion practices. Additionally, the role of management in valuing and respecting diverse opinions significantly influences the organizational climate. Interviewee P9 emphasized that management's actions in valuing employee input contribute to a positive and inclusive environment.

The openness to innovative ideas, as highlighted by Interviewee P12, further supports this inclusive culture by encouraging innovation and adaptation beyond past practices. Together, these elements leadership commitment, open-mindedness, a people-centric approach, training, and communication create a robust framework for fostering an inclusive organizational climate. This integrated approach ensures that inclusion management policies effectively shape a workplace where all employees feel valued and engaged.

Theme 8: The Role of policies in Creating an Inclusive Climate

Theme 8 is the role of policies in creating an inclusive climate within organizations. Policies provide a necessary framework for establishing and guiding inclusive practices, as noted by Interviewee P3, who emphasized the importance of having a clear policy in place to outline the organization's commitment to inclusion: "Absolutely you have to have a policy in place to set the framework for what you want to do." This framework helps in integrating inclusion into everyday practices, even when the term itself is not overtly highlighted in meetings, as Interviewee P1 observed: "Inclusion even though the word is not used as a catchphrase during meetings, we are ensuring that everybody is taken care of."

However, the implementation of these policies can present practical challenges, often falling on those in policy-making positions, as mentioned by Interviewee P10. There is a noted cultural shift from mere compliance to actively embracing diversity, with senior managers increasingly focusing on individual contributions rather than just fulfilling quotas, as Interviewee P3 observed: "I've really seen a change over the past few

years where senior managers are looking more at the person and seeing what they bring to the position."

Representation and visibility in leadership roles further reinforce the impact of inclusion policies, as highlighted by Interviewee P13, who noted the importance of diverse leadership in reflecting organizational commitment to inclusivity.

Additionally, there is a call for a broader vision and awareness among senior management, as indicated by Interviewee P12, who suggested that a comprehensive approach requires understanding diverse backgrounds beyond traditional practices.

Training and communication are essential for ensuring that these policies are effectively disseminated and enacted, with Interviewee P6 emphasizing the need for senior managers to participate in and champion these initiatives: "Senior managers are not excluded from taking their mandated training... they also have the responsibility to make sure the message gets out." Finally, Interviewee P2 pointed out that inclusivity must extend to decision-making and operations at all levels, emphasizing that meaningful action towards inclusion often occurs at the lower levels of management.

Theme 9: Challenges

Theme 9 was on challenges organizations face in implementing effective inclusion management policies. One notable challenge is the perception of inclusion as superficial. Interviewee P11 highlighted this issue by noting, "It will be heavy at the top or just a facade you are putting out there and you don't have everybody being represented." This suggests that while organizations may outwardly promote inclusivity, the actual representation and involvement of diverse groups may be lacking, leading to

skepticism about the authenticity of their efforts. Resistance to change and adherence to old practices also present significant obstacles.

Interviewee P10 pointed out, "Organizational goals should always consider setting new goals or improving the definition of goals by assessing the workforce." This indicates that organizations may struggle to evolve their inclusion practices due to entrenched habits and resistance to altering established procedures. Without continual reassessment and adaptation of goals, progress towards true inclusivity can be stymied. The political and social context further complicates the landscape of inclusion.

Interviewee P1 observed, "Our present political environment is very polarized... but stringent rule regulations do cover our behavior in the workplace." This highlights how broader societal issues, such as political polarization, can influence workplace dynamics, making it challenging to foster a genuinely inclusive environment despite regulatory measures.

Lack of representation within leadership is another critical challenge. Interviewee P7 remarked, "Certain organizations... people will talk about diversity, inclusion, equity, but the top leadership doesn't represent that." This suggests that a disconnect between the organization's stated values and the actual composition of its leadership can undermine efforts to achieve genuine inclusion.

Finally, miscommunication and cultural barriers can impede effective inclusion. Interviewee P7 noted, "There's a break in communication in terms of what's needed from certain people of certain communities because some people can't relate." This statement underscores how cultural misunderstandings and communication gaps can prevent

meaningful engagement with diverse communities, highlighting the need for more nuanced and empathetic approaches to inclusion.

Theme 10: Factors Influencing the Creation of an Inclusion Climate in the Work Environment

Theme 10 was factors influencing the creation of an inclusive climate within the work environment. Leadership and management policies are paramount, as articulated by Interviewee P3, who emphasized, "The easy answer here is it comes from the top. So, you want to have the head of the organization really set the tone." This highlights the critical role that top leadership plays in establishing and maintaining an inclusive climate. Effective leadership sets a precedent for organizational culture, shaping how inclusion is perceived and implemented throughout all levels.

Cultural and societal norms also significantly impact inclusion efforts. Interviewee P1 pointed out, "I think political environment is going to influence what the norm in the country permeates down to the smallest levels of our society." This statement underscores how broader societal attitudes, and political climates can influence workplace norms and practices, often filtering down to affect organizational behavior and policies.

Effective communication and education are crucial for fostering an inclusive environment. Interviewee P11 stressed the need to "educate people who don't know," emphasizing that ongoing education and clear communication are essential for raising awareness and understanding of inclusion practices. This reflects the importance of not

only implementing policies but also ensuring that employees are informed and educated about them.

Personal attitudes also play a role in shaping an inclusive work climate. Interviewee P10 highlighted the significance of "people-centric" employees, indicating that individual attitudes and behaviors towards others can influence the overall inclusiveness of the work environment. Employees who prioritize respect and empathy contribute positively to an inclusive culture.

Lastly, DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) policies are fundamental in creating an inclusive environment. Interviewee P15 noted that these policies "create the inclusion environment" necessary for organizational success. This underscores the importance of having structured policies in place to guide and reinforce inclusive practices, ensuring that the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion are embedded in the organization's framework.

Theme 11: Recommendations for Building and Sustaining Inclusion Management Policies

Theme 11 was the strategies for building and sustaining effective inclusion management policies within organizations. One key recommendation is to maintain a balanced approach to inclusion efforts. Interviewee P3 emphasized the importance of ensuring that inclusion initiatives do not overshadow or neglect other aspects of the workforce, stating, "It's crucial to strike a balance. We need to ensure that we're making everyone feel included, but we also don't want to go so far that it feels like we're

neglecting others." This balance helps in creating an environment where all employees feel valued without creating divisions.

Another critical strategy is the continuous review and engagement of policies. According to Interviewee P4, it is vital to regularly assess and update inclusion policies to ensure their effectiveness and relevance: "We can't just set policies and forget about them. Regular reviews are essential. We must keep engaging with our employees to see how well these policies work and where improvements are needed." This approach ensures that policies evolve with the needs of the organization and its employees.

Education and training also play a significant role in sustaining inclusion efforts. Interviewee P2 highlighted that training should be ongoing rather than a one-time event: "Training shouldn't be a one-time thing. Offering ongoing education through workshops and courses helps keep inclusion at the forefront of everyone's mind." Regular training helps maintain awareness and commitment to inclusion principles.

Finally, effective communication and feedback mechanisms are crucial for the success of inclusion policies. Interviewee P6 stressed the need for open and transparent communication: "Keeping the lines of communication open is vital. We should regularly update employees on our inclusion efforts and be transparent about what's working and what's not." This transparency fosters trust and ensures that employees are aware of and engaged with the organization's inclusion initiatives.

Summary

The analysis reveals inclusion and diversity organizational settings, with participants demonstrating a strong comprehension of these concepts, particularly

concerning inclusive hiring practices and the integration of diverse perspectives within the workplace. The data highlights the recognition of various benefits associated with inclusion and diversity, including enhanced workplace respect, improved hiring protocols, and increased opportunities for career advancement. Moreover, the positive influence of diversity on achieving organizational objectives and fostering employee engagement is apparent, with diverse viewpoints contributing to more effective problem-solving, innovation, and strengthened team dynamics.

However, the study also indicates variability in participants' awareness of inclusion management policies, with some expressing limited knowledge in this area. Inclusion management policies are identified as important to cultivating an inclusive organizational environment, although challenges such as resistance to change and the perception of these policies as superficial were also reported. Consequently, the findings suggest that while organizations are committed to inclusion and diversity, addressing these challenges will require a concerted effort through improved communication strategies, strong leadership commitment, and a cultural shift towards genuinely embracing diversity.

Chapter 5 will discuss these findings in relation to literature and theory to give a snapshot of diversion or alignment of this research with previous research. The chapter will also draw a conclusion on these findings and make necessary recommendations as per the findings of this research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of 17 senior managers in the New York transportation industry in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies in the New York transportation industry. This research was unique because it contributes to the understanding of how the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies foster employee engagement. This hermeneutic phenomenological study has also helped in contextualizing and amplifying the research study with attention to detailed experiential narratives of inclusion management by senior managers. These unique experiences have added to the knowledge of inclusion management policies and programs to inform scholarly understanding.

The nature of the study, hermeneutical phenomenology, was consistent with the chosen topic and design method to better understand the lived experiences and perceptions of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies in the public transportation industry. The use of a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study was to better understand the lived experiences of 17 senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies in the New York transportation industry. This sample size was needed to reach saturation. Over the years, theories have been predictive of the impact made by the examination of diversity research in organizations and continues to challenge inclusive outcomes (Martin, 2022).

Interpretation of Findings

The research uncovered that senior managers in the New York transportation industry understand the distinction between having a diverse workforce and creating an inclusive work environment (Mousa, 2021; Rosales et al., 2022). The literature highlighted group dynamics in managing diversity portrays the perception of diversity by virtue of individual differences and experiences in the group (Ormiston, 2016). All 17 participants gave a distinctive description of the differences existing between diversity and inclusive environment. While managers have made efforts to increase diversity, such as recruiting from a broader talent pool, these efforts are insufficient for fostering true inclusiveness (Garrick et al., 2024; Mousa, 2021; O'Donovan, 2017; Rosales et al., 2022).

Initiatives like mentorship programs and diversity councils were implemented, but there was recognized that these alone do not guarantee an inclusive environment (Mousa, 2021; Rosales et al., 2022). According to Garrick et al. (2024), inclusion is a broader concept that goes beyond the mere presence of diverse employees; it requires active efforts to integrate these employees into the organizational culture. Simply having a diverse workforce does not ensure inclusiveness, as inclusiveness involves embedding diversity into all levels of organizational practices (Garrick et al., 2024; Mousa, 2021; O'Donovan, 2017; Reitmanova et al., 2014; Rosales et al., 2022).

Inclusiveness involves creating an environment where diverse perspectives are actively sought out and valued (Elvestuen, 2016; Garrick et al., 2024; Mousa, 2021; Nishii, 2013; Reitmanova et al., 2014). In the literature, it was addressed in the benefits of inclusion that, the culture of diverse people interacting in a productive and constructive

way is enabled by inclusion management (Smith & Angood, 2020). This study revealed that Managers' experiences showed that while diversity metrics are quantifiable, inclusiveness involves qualitative aspects such as employee engagement and perception (Al-Hyassat, 2023; Garib, 2013; Sushmita et al., 2024). This necessitates the integration of inclusion practices into everyday organizational operations. For instance, inclusive leadership involves fostering an environment where all employees feel they can contribute and advance, which goes beyond the structural changes and requires ongoing efforts to adapt and evolve organizational culture (Garrick et al., 2024; Mousa, 2021; Nishii, 2013; Reitmanova et al., 2014; Shore et al., 2011). Diversity and inclusiveness in the transportation sector are crucial because they affect how organizations approach their inclusion strategies (Al-Hyassat, 2023; Garib, 2013). Recognizing that inclusiveness involves more than diverse hiring practices helps organizations create an environment where all employees feel valued and have equal opportunities (Hossain, 2024; Moka et al., 2023) as illustrated in the literature.

Researchers highlighted that senior manager who demonstrated a solid commitment to diversity and inclusion impacted employee engagement (Afridah et al., 2024; Atmaja et al., 2024; Gupta et al., 2022; Shiri, 2011). Higher employee satisfaction and involvement in inclusion initiatives were reported by managers who led by example and actively promoted inclusion. They described using their leadership roles to advocate for and implement policies that support inclusiveness. Ohunakin et al. (2019) argued that leadership commitment is essential for the success of diversity and inclusion initiatives as shown in the building of inclusive diversity culture in literature. Influential leaders'

model inclusive behaviors and advocate for practices that embed inclusion into the organizational culture. Leaders are pivotal in translating diversity policies into actual inclusive practices. Leaders who visibly support inclusion can drive cultural change and improve employee engagement (Garrick et al., 2024; Mousa, 2021; O'Donovan, 2017; Reitmanova et al., 2014; Rosales et al., 2022). The positive impact of leadership commitment on employee engagement is demonstrated through several mechanisms. Leaders who actively participate in and support inclusion efforts help to create a culture where inclusion is prioritized and valued (Mousa, 2021; O'Donovan, 2017; Rosales et al., 2022). This involves setting the tone for the organization, allocating resources for inclusion initiatives, and modeling inclusive behavior.

By actively engaging in diversity and inclusion culture, leaders foster an environment where employees feel that their contributions are recognized and that they have opportunities for growth and advancement (Garrick et al., 2024; Mousa, 2021; O'Donovan, 2017; Reitmanova et al., 2014; Rosales et al., 2022). Leadership commitment sets the organizational tone for how diversity and inclusion are perceived and acted upon. Leaders who demonstrate a genuine commitment to inclusion are likelier to inspire and motivate employees, leading to higher engagement and satisfaction. This commitment also helps to ensure that inclusion initiatives are integrated into organizational practices and sustained over time (Garrick et al., 2024; Kramar, 2014; Mousa, 2021; O'Donovan, 2017; Reitmanova et al., 2014; Rosales et al., 2022).

Banham (2018) highlighted the difficulty of measuring inclusiveness due to its qualitative nature. Sabharwal et al. (2019) also pointed out that existing quantitative

studies often need to capture the nuances of inclusion. While diversity metrics are straightforward, measuring the quality of inclusiveness is more complex (Garrick et al., 2024; Mousa, 2021; Rosales et al., 2022). Challenges included capturing employee perceptions of inclusion and assessing the impact of inclusion initiatives on organizational outcomes. Effective measurement of inclusion requires a combination of quantitative data (e.g., representation metrics) and qualitative data (e.g., employee surveys and interviews) to assess how well inclusion practices are being implemented and perceived (Garrick et al., 2024; Kramar, 2014; Mousa, 2021; Rosales et al., 2022).

Measuring inclusion involves integrating quantitative and qualitative methods (Lee, 2024; Swaroop, 2021). Quantitative metrics provide data on demographic representation, while qualitative methods, such as surveys and interviews, offer insights into employee perceptions and experiences of inclusion (Lee, 2024; Swaroop, 2021; Yadav, 2024). Accurate measurement of inclusion is essential for assessing the effectiveness of diversity and inclusion initiatives (Gonzalez et al., 2024; Gutterman, 2023; Okatta et al., 2024).). With reliable metrics, organizations can determine whether their inclusion efforts achieve their intended outcomes (Gonzalez et al., 2024).

While many organizations have implemented inclusion management programs, ensuring their effectiveness is challenging (Besiktepe et al., 2024). Senior managers report difficulties aligning inclusion policies with organizational practices and maintaining momentum for inclusion efforts over time (Brennan et al., 2022; Chung et al., 2020; Iwanaga et al., 2024). There is a gap between policy implementation and

effective practice, noting that many organizations need help integrating inclusion policies into their daily operations (David, 2024).

Creating an inclusive environment requires more than just implementing policies; it involves ongoing effort and commitment to embed these policies into organizational culture (Damanik et al., 2023; Ndindeng, 2024). Successful implementation of inclusion programs requires continuous monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation based on feedback (Cox & Blake, 1991; Damanik et al., 2023; David, 2024; Ndindeng, 2024).

Limitations of the Study

Limitations in a study may be attributed to unforeseen circumstances beyond the researchers' control which may be attributed to the flaws in the study and or research designs (Tracy, 2019). Scholars need to take critical consideration into the prevailing flaws associated with the study design, the methodology implored and the data collection to ensure result validity and reliability (Tracy, 2019). Personal bias on the research's subject matter should be an intrinsic limitation in a qualitative research study.

Barriers that were identified to this study were time and privacy issues. The issue of information security and the guarding of intellectual property discouraged some participants from honestly and openly speaking on the issue of diversity and inclusion, and some from participating in the interviews. Time was a contributive factor as this study involves working senior managers and as such care would be taken to allocate times that best work for both parties throughout data collection and some could not find the time to be interviewed withing the period of the study.

Recommendations

Organizations should prioritize senior managers' active involvement in developing and implementing inclusion management programs. This study demonstrates that leadership commitment is essential for driving meaningful change. Leaders must endorse inclusion initiatives, model inclusive behaviors, and integrate these principles into their daily operations. According to Corbett & Narayanan (2022), broader education is needed to shed more light on the importance of incorporating inclusive leadership in corporate environments.

Organizations should invest in developing and utilizing comprehensive measurement tools to address the challenge of measuring the impact of inclusion programs. These tools should combine quantitative data, such as workforce demographics and turnover rates, with qualitative employee feedback. This approach will provide a more holistic view of the effectiveness of inclusion initiatives. Regular assessment and refinement of these tools will help ensure that inclusion programs are continuously improved and aligned with organizational goals. It is imperative for organizations to engage in continuous re-evaluation of policies to sustain inclusiveness (Umeh et al., 2023).

Inclusion should be incorporated into the organizational culture rather than treated as a standalone initiative. This involves integrating inclusive practices into all aspects of the workplace, including recruitment, training, and performance management. It is important to align policies with everyday practices and foster a culture where inclusiveness is a core value. Including conferences to invoke the use of implicit practice

of inclusion supports roll outs of policies (King et al., 2023). Training programs should be developed to educate employees at all levels about the principles of inclusivity and their role in creating an inclusive environment.

Organizations should implement ongoing employee engagement and feedback mechanisms to ensure that inclusion programs remain relevant and effective. Regular surveys, focus groups, and feedback sessions can help identify areas for improvement and provide insights into employees' experiences. This iterative approach will help organizations adapt their strategies to emerging needs and challenges, enhancing inclusiveness and employee satisfaction. According to Wadhwa & Aggarwal (2023), employees perform better when they feel they are heard and included in the day-to-day management of the company.

Increasing diversity within senior management teams can help ensure that inclusion strategies are more effectively tailored to diverse employee needs. Trkulja et al., (2024) acknowledged the impact of diversity in management teams to promote inclusiveness. Organizations should actively work to promote and support diverse candidates for leadership positions. The finding that varied perspectives at the leadership level can lead to more successful inclusion practices supports this recommendation.

Implications

This research filled the gap in exploring the perception of diversity and inclusion in business performance goals. This study helped to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of senior managers in the implementation of inclusion management programs

and policies. Park (2020) acknowledged the importance of incorporating diversity and inclusion into organizational culture yet, an inclusive workplace is in needed greatly.

Implications for Social Positive Change

The social positive change for this study was to raise awareness and create an understanding of how inclusion is seen in organizations and the role it plays in employee engagement. The study fostered a continuous dialogue of inclusion management as it applies to managing diversity in multi-faceted organizations. A relationship exists between workforce diversity management and job performance (Ohunakin et al., 2019). As such, an inclusive work environment has the potential for influencing job satisfaction and yielding organizational outcomes as shown by the study.

Implications for Theory

My research informed scholarly understanding and provided direction for inclusion management programs and policies transferable across all industries and organizational sectors. Inclusion management is the next step to sustaining diversity and inclusion management concepts that are in place in all organizations, institutions, and companies in the U.S. My study covered only senior managers in the transportation industry. Organizations should put in place principles which work to uplift and not undermine the authenticity of diversity management (Hauret & Williams, 2020).

Implications for Policy and Practice

The research created awareness and introduced organizations to the realities surrounding diversity management and how inclusive policies and strategies directly reflect employee productivity. At the center of diversity and inclusion is strategic human

resource management. According to Murison et al., (2021), it is not enough to have a career if it cannot reflect the benefits of employee performance and overall organizational output. The study therefore was important for management to strategically evaluate human resource management to carefully ascertain the effects on employee performance in an inclusive environment with the research findings.

Conclusions

Senior managers' lived experiences reveal that while diversity initiatives are widely adopted, achieving true inclusiveness requires more than a diverse workforce. This study shows that inclusiveness fosters an environment where all employees feel genuinely valued and integrated beyond mere demographic representation. Leadership commitment emerges as a pivotal factor in the success of inclusion initiatives. Research suggests that effective inclusion necessitates leaders modeling inclusive behaviors and integrating inclusion into organizational practices. Senior managers who actively display their commitment to inclusivity increase employee engagement and satisfaction.

A significant challenge identified in this study is the difficulty in measuring the effectiveness of inclusion programs. A comprehensive approach, incorporating both demographic data and qualitative feedback, is essential for accurately assessing the impact of inclusion efforts. Moreover, the study concludes that implementing inclusion management programs demands more than developing policies. Effective integration requires aligning these policies with organizational practices and sustaining long-term momentum. This finding supports the need for ongoing engagement, assessment, and

adaptation to ensure that inclusion policies are effectively embedded into the organizational culture.

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Appendix A: Invitation Letter

There is a new study about senior managers' perception of inclusion management policy implementation that could help managers in the transportation industry to better understand experiential narratives of inclusion management by senior managers. For this study, you are invited to share your lived experiences and perceptions of how the implementation of inclusion management programs and policies foster employee engagement.

About the study:

- One 30 – 60 minutes phone, zoom, teams or in person interview that will be audio recorded (no videorecording)
- To protect your privacy, the published study will not share any names or details that identify you.

Volunteers must meet these requirements:

- Senior manager who has 5 or more years of professional experience in the New York City transportation industry
- Have continuously been involved in the implementation of inclusion management policies.
- Have knowledge and professional opinions about management's role in promoting employee engagement within the transportation industry.

This interview is part of the doctoral study for Regina Lassey, a doctoral student at Walden University. Interviews will take place during June.

Please reach out to let the researcher know of your interest. You are welcome to forward it to others who might be interested.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Demographic Questions:

- Participant Identification Alpha Character and Number:
- Age:
- Gender:
- Ethnic Background:
- Number of Years as a senior manager:
- Average Numbers of Hours Worked Daily/Weekly:

Interview Questions:

1. What is your definition of diversity and inclusion?
2. What are the benefits of inclusion as a senior manager in the transportation industry?
3. What is your perception on how diversity and inclusion affect organizational goals in general?
4. Tell me about your experience regarding how diversity affects employee engagement, if any?
5. What are your experiences regarding how inclusion affects employee engagement, if any?
6. Are you aware of the inclusion management policies and if so, how have they influenced the way you work?
7. In your opinion, what do you think influences the creation of inclusion climate in your work environment?

8. Does the implementation of inclusion management policies play any role in creating a climate of inclusion based on your experience? Please explain why or why not.
9. Based on your experience, please describe how inclusion management policies foster a culture of inclusion at the senior management level.
10. What actions should an organization take towards building and sustaining inclusion management policies based on your experience as a senior level manager?