

“I do not Feel Included”: Teachers’ Experiences of Workplace Inclusion at Higher Education

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Abstract

Workplace inclusion is believed to be an attractive and professional environment in which equality prevails for all members and they feel importantly involved and interactive with leaders during decision-making process along with availability of all information in the institution. The sole objective of the study was to explore the challenges being faced by teachers for workplace inclusion at higher education. Qualitative data were collected from 12 public sector university teachers from Punjab through a self-developed interview protocol comprised of 9 open-ended questions. The data were analyzed by developing categories and through initial coding that ultimately provided themes and sub themes. The results showed that departmental environment must be orchestrated with morals, flexibility, fairmindedness, cater diversity, obligation, unprejudice, collaboration, collective decision making, commitment, communication, satisfaction, individuality, sense of belongingness, acceptance, teamwork and social relation. Moreover, leadership attributes influence individual as well as group wellbeing of teachers for workplace inclusion at higher education. It is recommended that leadership should promote culture where all teachers should equally be treated, be able to participate and be encourage different strategies to scaffold the environment for workplace inclusion at higher education.

Keywords: workplace inclusion, institutional environment, teachers’ wellbeing

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Introduction

Workplace inclusion is an environment in which teachers have faith that they are treated equally and valued by the institution regardless of their unique position and special capacity (Avery, McKay, Wilson, and Volpone, 2008). Workplace inclusion is very important for any organization because the members feel better and can work better. The study intends to identify the challenges that create hurdle in bringing workplace inclusion at higher education. Leadership attributes and organizational environment are the key elements to promote workplace inclusion. Leadership attributes includes leader's creativity, unbiasedness, ability to cater diversity, collaborative skill, commitment towards workplace inclusion (Alzghoul, Elrehail, Emeagwali, & AlShboul, 2018). Organizational environmental factors include cultural awareness, organizational values, flexibility and fairness towards workplace inclusion (Beer, 2010). These factors influence on workplace inclusion in terms of individual and group well-being. The elements of individual well-being are commitment to work, effective communication, involvement in decision making process, build self-confidence and self-esteem, sense of uniqueness and sense of belongingness. Similarly, the elements of group well-being include feeling of acceptance, ability to work in teamwork and build social relationships.

Workplace inclusion is an important concept because it provides opportunity to include all individuals in working environment more positively and independently, it leads to better consequences as well as satisfaction, commitment towards objectives (Shore, Randel, Chung, Dean, Holcombe Ehrhart, and Singh, 2011). Related literature suggests that when organization doesn't give much importance to inclusion practices then they cannot fulfil their desired outcomes and ultimately, dissatisfaction and anarchy spreads which leads to exclusion (Ainscow, 2005). Exclusion refers to such activities in which individuals are not valued and treated independently and not considered special members of the institution (Barak, 1999).

Exclusion and inequalities are also observed in US history in terms of gender, race, social background and minorities (Ozturk and Tatli, 2016). These minorities feel exclusion in actions taken by

authorities such as promotion, rewards, involvement in decision making process. It also indicates the adverse effects of exclusion in relation to social, cultural and various form of discriminations (Richards, 2001). These minorities have no proper laws that deliver protection and legislation related to inclusion in the US (Findler, Wind, and Barak, 2007). Equal opportunity and managing diversity are new ideas in the context of Pakistan, a country having diverse groups of individuals with culture, values, beliefs, language as well as religion (Syed, Pio, and Ali, 2013). Cultural diversity also observed in Pakistan in terms of language, religion and beliefs (Syed, 2008). The idea of inclusion is getting importance day by day hence, institutions need to inculcate it.

Diversity exists at workplace enriches the educational experience. We learn from those whose experiences, beliefs, and perspectives are different from our own, and these lessons can be taught best in a richly diverse intellectual and social environment. The study intended to explore workplace inclusion of teachers through their own voices and views at higher education.

Review of Literature

Managing diversity is vital element to workplace inclusion, it is important need for all managers to manage diversity in their organization. Literature point of view related to inclusive practices in organization emphasizes on the leaders and managers understanding about the inclusion practices as well as discrimination strategies. Literature support to different required tools for managing inclusive practices (Saari & Judge, 2004). Managers and top management must recognize their cultural preferences in term of values, flexibility and fairness practices in an organization (Dike, 2013).

Contribution to Workplace Inclusion

There is vital to celebrate differences in an organization for the better outcomes. Recently, globalization highly demand better consequences, outcomes and there are need for the maximum productivity and progress due to the competition (Morris, 2015). Thus, it is important to include all the individuals in working

environment for better consequences. So, here discussed some beneficial outcomes to workplace inclusion.

Now a day's leaders and other senior organizational management face challenges to increase their production, due to the vastly competition every organization try to upsurge their efficiency for the better survival (Brugnaro & Timmons, 2007). So, the most important strategy to cope with this situation is workplace inclusion. Because when every individual feel that they are active member of the organization, thus they can contribute actively in all the organizational tasks, so the results are higher production and efficiency (Geisthardt, Botherson, & Cook, 2002). Another important factor that fosters workplace inclusion in any organization was creativity. It is leadership responsibility to encourages that particular environment in which creativity has much value (Alzghoul, Elrehail, Emeagwali, & AlShboul, 2018). According to the literature, creativity has been emerged recently, thus there is an important thing that should be recognized by the management creativity is another essential component for better performance and workplace inclusion as well (Egan, 2005).

Teamwork has an important and essential place in every organization. Most of the research work emphasized the importance and need of the teamwork because every individual has unique and special abilities, skills and aptitude. And most importantly, individual cannot put their maximum efforts and energies to any tasks (Strauss, Griffin, & Rafferty, 2009). Due to the pressure of globalization its need to work collaboratively in all working environment. It is the leader responsibility to work collaboratively and engage all workers in activities (Mitchell, Boyle, Parker, Giles, Chiang, & Joyce, 2015). Thus, leadership plays an important and essential role to promote inclusive practices to workplace with the help of different steps such as collaboration and team work. Through this leaders and employee work together in a healthy and conducive environment (Gotsis & Grimanis, 2016).

In an organization every individual come with different and unique identity, organization is a place where everyone has chance to interact each other, this interaction give prospect to individual to maximize their experiences, because everyone has different and unique ability, when people meet and cooperate diverse culture, irrespective of different background, social and economic

background outcome are gain experience (Smith, 2017). Sturm (2006) founded that inclusive workplace emphasized on the idea of equity in terms of institutional environment which includes active participation of all members without any discrimination. Institution realized their members’ potential and encourage them to participated fully in institutional environment.

The diversity universities continue to be able to reach out and make a conscious effort to build healthy and diverse learning environments that are appropriate for their missions. The success of higher education and the strength of our democracy depend on it. The sole objective of the study was to explore the challenges being faced by teachers for workplace inclusion at higher education.

Objectives of the Study

The sole objective of the study was to explore the challenges being faced by teachers for workplace inclusion at higher education. These challenges might be explicit or implicit that teachers feel in workplace.

1. How does organizational environment promote workplace inclusion for teachers at higher education?
2. Do leadership attributes contribute to workplace inclusion/exclusion for teachers?
3. Is there any relationship of workplace inclusion with individual wellbeing of teachers at higher education?

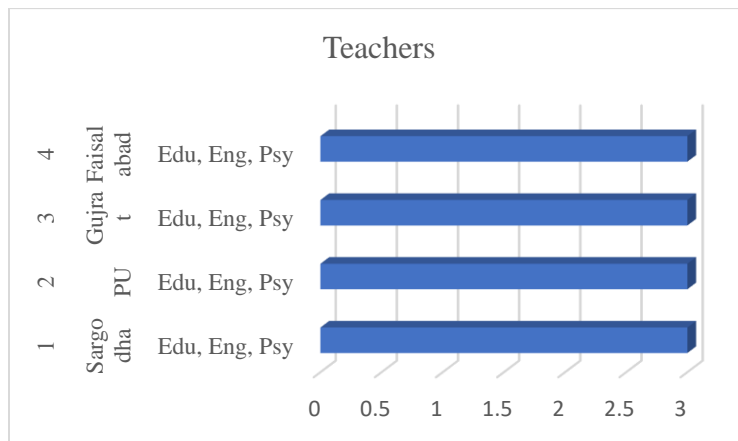
Methodology

The study was qualitative in nature. Qualitative data were collected from 12 public sector university teachers from Punjab through a self-developed interview protocol based on 9 open-ended questions. The data were analyzed by developing categories and through initial coding that ultimately provided sub themes and themes. The study used qualitative approach to explore challenges to workplace inclusion at higher education in terms of organizational leadership attributes towards inclusion and impact of workplace inclusion on well-being (individual and group) at higher education. The qualitative approach was used for the study to

explore the challenges whether they are explicit or implicit in nature within workplace in which they have been experiencing such challenges while working and completing their tasks and assignments.

Sampling and Sample

Population is a large group of individuals who have common characteristics according to the interest of the researcher. All individuals of a particular characteristic or group of individuals are the part of the population (Best, 1999). Population of current study were all teachers of public general universities of Punjab province of Pakistan. The qualitative method does not need a large sample for the exploration of the phenomena. Therefore, the study has been conducted on a smaller sample that fulfils the objective. For the qualitative phase, commonly for qualitative data it is sufficient to study a few participants (Creswell & Poth, 2017). According to Creswell (2017), 5 to 25 participants are good enough for qualitative study, and “at least six” respondents are suggested by Morse (1994). In the light of all these evidences, researcher selected 12 university teachers as s sample from Punjab province. Researchers used purposive sampling for the purpose of data collection. Teachers willing to participate in the study were included in the sample.



Graph 1: Name of universities, departments and number of teachers for qualitative data

The questions asked from the teachers in interviews were: what do you think, all the teachers are treated same in the department? In your view, does the department promotes such culture which stresses upon the participation of all teachers? In your point of view, all teachers are valued in the eye of head of the department? What do you think, the chairperson is fair to all teachers? In your view, the head of the institution motivates the members to work together? If the teachers are involved in all activities of the institution, does it help to enhance their commitment level? Are all teachers really committed to their work? Do the teachers like to work in the institution? In your point of view, teachers have ownership to work for the department? Do the members have healthy relationship with one another? What do you think, what is the satisfaction level of teachers in your department? Interview protocol that is self-constructed by the researchers to measure in-depth understanding of the phenomena under investigation. Each interview consisted of 9 questions. The university teachers were interviewed through interview protocol comprised of nine open ended questions.

Interviews

The interviews were open ended and sometimes researchers changed the order of asking interviews depending on the situation and the mode of exploring teachers’ experiences of workplace inclusion at higher education. Occasionally, interviewer explained the situation earlier than asking the questions. In the interviews, teachers expressed their views and voices in detail about the questions. These interviews unfold many potential dimensions of workplace inclusion. These interviews also bequeath the sociological perspective of teachers who were working in the nexus of inclusion at the workplace in universities. The interviews unfold useful aspects of teachers’ experiences which questionnaire might not explore. According to Bardin (2007), the qualitative approach is used in hypothesis testing phases. This procedure is more intuitive but also more flexible, more adaptable to unanticipated clues for evolving hypotheses. It is used during the phases of developing hypotheses. Interview is the path of the interaction between interviewer and interviewee. Qualitative research is based on a more holistic view and it is not about answering questions such as “to

what extent” or “how well” something is done (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2010). In the study, the researchers used open-ended questions in interviews that allowed researchers to control the process and also gave freedom to respondents to express their feelings. The interviews’ sessions lasted from 15-35 minutes depending on the way the participants are explaining the phenomenon. Participants shared their experiences in Urdu language because they were comfortable to express their opinion better in their national language. Each interview was face-to-face with the participating teachers. These interviews were recorded by researchers with teachers' permission. It took two weeks to complete interviews from all 12 teachers. Further, the interviews were transcribed in Urdu by the researchers after listening recordings. When all the interviews were transcribed in Urdu then these interviews were translated into English. The translated material and content were further corrected and validated by English Language teacher to keep the data as original as it was in Urdu language.

Thematic Analysis

Data were collected through interviews with teachers. Because the research was qualitative in nature and a thematic analysis process of Braun and Clarke (2012) was used to analyze the data. Thematic analysis is the most commonly used qualitative method for analyzing the interviews. According to Braun and Clarke (2012) thematic analysis is used to identify, analyze and report patterns (themes) within the qualitative data and the thematic approach can generate an insightful analysis that answers particular problems. The qualitative process does not require the figure and numerical data rather it used words and observations.

Braun and Clarke (2012) described following steps of thematic analysis; familiarizing data, generating preliminary codes, themes searching, themes reviewing, defining and naming themes, developing final report. After conducted interviews, researcher transcribed interviews, coded, categorized, drawing themes and sub themes for getting more insight information. Each theme and sub theme were elaborated for getting answers of each research question under the “challenges to and workplace inclusion at higher education”.

Departmental Environment

Departmental environment can be showed that their culture is inclusive or not for the teachers because culture is a combination of different people that is place at the same place and have a common attitude, principles, values, norms, and objectives Gjuraj (2013). Teachers elaborated departmental culture during interview and their point of views are mentioned below:

“He said I have healthy informal relationships with all my colleagues and department environment is favorable for all teachers. Every teacher has freedom to do their work by their own way (T2).”

“He said my department culture is highly encouraging and motivating to all teachers. There is an environment where healthy competition encouraged by the head of the department as well as teachers (T3).”

He said “The preliminary interests at the department as same as my personal values. I’m not sacrificing my personal values because in my department teachers are free to do things and not to face any stress regarding their values and beliefs (T2).” She said “At my department all teachers giving equal place. Every teacher enjoys their work because in my department assigning tasks to teachers according to their abilities and interests (T5).”

He said “I feel respected as a worker. In my department teachers are treated equally and fairly (T2).”

Leadership attributes

The important aspect of leadership attribute that can foster workplace inclusion is the leader’s commitment towards inclusion. The choice of a leader and their strong belief related to their working environment and they are strongly engaged to attain institutional objectives (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982).

He said “The chair of my department creates an environment where teachers take ownership to do their work. Head knows the teacher’s importance in the departmental success, so that he tries to include all teachers and appreciate teachers’ ideas (T3).”

She said “The chair assigns dignified responsibilities to their favorite teachers only. Due to this discrimination other teachers don’t boost their morale (T4).”

She said “The chair provides encouragement to all teachers after completion of tasks. In my department all teachers are treated fairly. This is shown because head appreciates every one that do their work. All teachers are appreciated and acknowledged by the head after task completion (T5).”

Individual well-being

An important element of individual well-being is teacher’s commitment related to their work. Much as working environment was conducive for teachers, their commitment level increased, it leads to workplace inclusion.

She said “All teachers don’t their best for the success and progress of the department. In my department everyone is not willing to help each other for task completion. There is a competition in which everyone is working on things which are more favorable to them (T4).”

She said “Teachers feel happy to share knowledge with colleagues. Teachers are motivated to share knowledge with colleagues without any hesitation (T6).”

Group well-being

An important aspect of group wellbeing is social relationships with colleagues. Teachers Interviews generated examples are mentioned below:

She said “All teachers have a good informal relation with their colleagues. In my department all teachers are happy with each other. Any type of grouping doesn’t see in department (T9).”

She said” All teachers have a mutual understanding in my department. All teachers are willing to help each other (T10).”

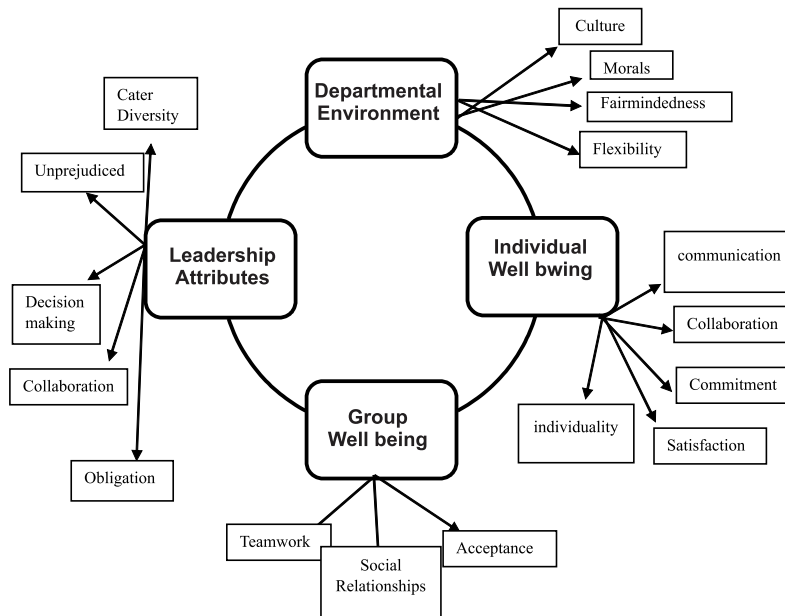


Figure 1: A sample of theme ‘Departmental Environment’ and its sub-themes extracted from qualitative data

Table 1

Frequency of sub-themes derived from four themes

Sr. No	Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency
1	Departmental Environment	Culture	9
		Values	5
		Flexibility	6
		Fairness	12
2	Leadership Attributes	Cater diversity	7
		Commitment	4
		Unbiased	9
		Collaboration	7
		Decision making	4
3	Individual Well-being	Commitment	8
		Communication	3
		Sense of uniqueness	4
		Sense of Belongingness	3
		Satisfaction	3
4	Group well-being	Teamwork	4
		Acceptance	3
		Social relationship	2

Conclusion and Discussion

To promote workplace inclusion, culture, values, flexibility and fairness play an important role. In the light of teacher's views, the culture of the institution is favorable when the teachers accomplish their objectives in a better way. And the departmental values enable teachers to do work freely. Hence, the teachers are confident because their personal values and departmental values don't differ. Flexibility also plays an important role for the improvement of workplace inclusion. The teachers are provided flexible environment to achieve their goals and it promotes workplace inclusion. In the same way, fairness is also essential for fostering workplace inclusion. According to teachers' views, they are treated equal in their institutions but some teachers don't think so. They feel that there is no fairness in the institutional activities that is the great hindrance in workplace inclusion.

Leadership attributes promote workplace inclusion in which leader's commitment level, ability to cater diversity, unbiasedness, collaboration and shared decision making is important. According to teachers' point of views, all teachers are different from one another from different perspectives. And the leaders tackle them accordingly that is important for institution. Some teachers have different views on it, they thought teachers should be assigned the tasks according to their skills and abilities. In this way they perform better. Some teachers view about this, in their institutions same tasks are assigned to the teachers repeatedly than it will be outraged with the other teachers. Leader is committed to promote workplace inclusion through different activities including leader collaboration with teachers, unbiasedness and teacher's involvement in decision making in their institution.

Workplace inclusion has positive effects on teacher's individual wellbeing. They perform their best and always committed to their work. In the light of teacher's views, workplace inclusion creates sense of uniqueness and sense of belonging, due to this they do their work with interest. They consider that their work is unique, they get confidence and it strengthen their relationship with the institution. Workplace inclusion not only affects teacher's individuality but also fruitful and helpful for the group wellbeing of teachers. All teachers agree that it enhances teamwork aptitude.

They like to work in teamwork and it makes their relationships better with colleagues as well as leader.

Recommendations

1. Leaders are required to take steps and encourage different strategies to foster workplace inclusion that shows the positive influence on teachers’ individual and group wellbeing. Workplace inclusion has positive influence on individual wellbeing of teachers, thus, higher education should promote culture where all teachers are included in departmental activities.
2. Similarly, workplace inclusion has positive influence on group wellbeing of teachers, thus, higher education should promote culture where all teachers have freedom to give solution of any confronted issue at the department.
3. Our study was limited to university teachers only. Therefore, future study maybe conducted that should include schools and colleges teachers also.
4. Likewise, future study may be conducted in both public and private universities to examine the difference in both of them.

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