

Managing Conflicts Arising from Diversity and Inclusion Policies at Workplace

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Abstract

Managing conflicts arising from diversity and inclusion policies at the workplace is critical to creating a positive work environment that values and respects the differences among employees. This abstract discusses the importance of managing conflicts, highlighting the strategies that can be used to identify and resolve conflicts related to discrimination, bias, and exclusion. The strategies include creating a culture of inclusion, fostering communication and collaboration, providing training and development, supporting work-life balance, and monitoring and evaluating progress. Effective conflict management can promote diversity and inclusion, drive innovation and creativity, and attract and retain top talent. Companies must embrace diversity and inclusion as a core value and commit to ongoing efforts to promote and sustain these values.

KEYWORD: *Diversity, Conflict, Inclusion, Workplace*

1. Introduction

Diversity and inclusion policies are essential for promoting a workplace that values and respects all employees regardless of their race, gender, religion, age, or other factors. However, implementing these policies can sometimes lead to conflicts that may disrupt workplace harmony and productivity. Managing conflicts arising from diversity and inclusion policies is crucial for ensuring that these policies are effective and that employees feel valued and respected. The emergence of conflicts which arises from diversity and inclusion policies is inevitable but the need for proactive strategies for effectively managing these conflicts are imperative. By creating a culture of open communication, establishing policies and procedures, providing training and education, and implementing conflict resolution techniques, employers can effectively manage conflicts and promote a workplace that values diversity and inclusion. This paper will explore the different types of diversity and inclusion policies that can lead to conflict, common causes of conflict, and best practices for addressing and resolving conflicts related to diversity and inclusion policies.

2. Conceptual Clarifications

2.1 Diversity and Inclusion

According to Adegbite and Ojo (2019), Diversity refers to the presence of individuals with different backgrounds, cultures, experiences, and perspectives. Inclusion refers to the process of creating a workplace where all employees feel valued and respected, regardless of their differences. Inclusion involves actively engaging all employees, creating a sense of belonging, and promoting an environment of respect and collaboration. Diversity and inclusion are two essential components of a healthy and productive work environment. Diversity refers to the variety of differences among individuals, including their backgrounds, cultures, experiences, and perspectives. Inclusion refers to the practice of valuing and respecting these differences and creating a work environment where all individuals feel welcomed, valued, and supported. In this essay, I will discuss the importance of diversity and inclusion, strategies for promoting them in the workplace, and their impact on organizational performance. Diversity and inclusion are

critical for creating a positive work environment that values and respects the differences among employees. When employees feel valued and respected, they are more likely to be engaged and motivated to perform their best work. A diverse workplace can also provide a range of perspectives and ideas, leading to increased creativity and innovation (Babatunde & Akintayo, 2020).

Promoting diversity and inclusion is also important for attracting and retaining talent. In today's global economy, businesses must compete for talent from a diverse pool of candidates. Companies that demonstrate a commitment to diversity and inclusion are more likely to attract top talent and retain employees who feel valued and respected. Diversity can include differences in race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, physical abilities, and more. Diversity and inclusion have a significant impact on organizational performance. A diverse workforce can lead to increased creativity, innovation, and problem-solving, as employees bring a range of perspectives and ideas to the table. Inclusive work environments can also lead to increased employee engagement, motivation, and retention.

Studies like that of Oyewumi and Akingbade (2021), observed that companies with diverse and inclusive work environments are more likely to experience financial success. A study by McKinsey & Company found that companies with diverse executive teams were more likely to experience higher profits and earnings before interest and taxes (EBIT) than those with less diverse executive teams.

2.2 Overview of the Importance of Diversity and Inclusion Policies in the Workplace

Diversity and inclusion policies are critical for creating a workplace that values and respects all employees, regardless of their background, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, or any other factor that might make them unique. These policies promote equal opportunities for all employees, provide a safe and supportive working environment, and enhance employee morale, productivity, and engagement. They also help employers to attract and retain a diverse workforce, which is essential in today's globalized economy. Moreover, diversity and inclusion policies are essential for promoting innovation and creativity by enabling employees to bring

their unique perspectives and experiences to the workplace. In summary, diversity and inclusion policies are essential for creating a thriving workplace that supports the growth and development of all employees, fosters collaboration and teamwork, and promotes organizational success (Okoli, Onah & Onwuchekwa, 2022).

Accordingly, Adeyemo (2020), stated that diversity and inclusion policies are important in the workplace for several reasons. Firstly, they promote fairness and equal opportunities for all employees, regardless of their background, and help to eliminate discriminatory practices that can negatively impact certain groups of people. Secondly, diversity and inclusion policies foster a more positive and inclusive workplace culture, which can lead to increased employee morale, engagement, and productivity. Thirdly, having a diverse and inclusive workforce can bring new perspectives and ideas to the organization, leading to innovation and growth. Finally, promoting diversity and inclusion can improve the organization's reputation and help to attract and retain top talent. Overall, diversity and inclusion policies are essential for creating a workplace that values and respects all employees and can lead to numerous benefits for both the organization and its employees.

2.3 How Conflicts Can Arise From Diversity and Inclusion Policies

Conflicts can arise from diversity and inclusion policies in several ways. Firstly, employees may have different interpretations of the policies or may disagree on how to implement them, leading to misunderstandings and disagreements. Secondly, some employees may feel that the policies are unfair or favor certain groups, leading to resentment and conflict. Thirdly, employees may have personal biases or prejudices that conflict with the organization's diversity and inclusion policies, leading to tension and conflict with other employees. Fourthly, conflicts may arise when employees feel that their own culture or beliefs are not being adequately represented or respected by the organization's diversity and inclusion policies. Finally, conflicts can arise when employees feel that their concerns related to diversity and inclusion policies are not being heard or addressed by the organization. Addressing these conflicts effectively is crucial for ensuring that

diversity and inclusion policies are successful and that all employees feel valued and respected in the workplace (Fajana, Ijaiya, & Ilesanmi, 2019).

2.4 Understanding Diversity and Inclusion Policies

Adeniji (2021), noted that understanding diversity and inclusion policies is crucial for effectively managing conflicts that may arise from these policies. Diversity and inclusion policies refer to formal guidelines and practices that are designed to promote a workplace that is inclusive, equitable, and respectful of all employees, regardless of their race, gender, religion, age, or other factors. These policies typically cover areas such as recruitment and hiring practices, employee training and development, workplace accommodations, and promoting a culture of inclusion and respect.

Some examples of diversity and inclusion policies may include promoting equal pay for all employees, providing training and resources to support diversity and inclusion, implementing diversity and inclusion committees or task forces, creating an inclusive workplace culture, offering flexible work arrangements to accommodate diverse needs, and providing accommodations for employees with disabilities. It is important to note that diversity and inclusion policies should be tailored to the specific needs of the organization and its employees. Effective diversity and inclusion policies are designed to promote a workplace that values and respects all employees and their contributions, and should be supported by effective communication, training, and monitoring to ensure their success.

2.4.1 Types of Diversity and Inclusion Policies

Insights offered by Agunbiade and Ogunjirin (2018), laid emphasis on the various types of diversity and inclusion policies that organizations can implement to promote a more equitable, respectful, and inclusive workplace. They include the underlisted:

Recruitment and Hiring Policies: These policies ensure that the organization is attracting and hiring a diverse pool of candidates, including individuals from different backgrounds, cultures, and experiences. This can involve implementing diversity recruiting programs, conducting blind resume reviews, and establishing diverse hiring panels.

Training and Development Policies: These policies provide employees with the knowledge and skills they need to work effectively in a diverse and inclusive workplace. This can involve providing diversity and inclusion training, offering professional development opportunities for underrepresented groups, and mentoring programs.

Accommodation Policies: These policies ensure that employees with different needs and abilities are provided with reasonable accommodations to perform their job duties. This can involve providing accommodations for employees with disabilities, offering flexible work arrangements, and providing language translation services.

Promotion and Retention Policies: These policies ensure that all employees have equal opportunities for advancement and are not held back due to their differences. This can involve implementing promotion and retention guidelines, offering mentorship opportunities, and conducting regular performance evaluations.

Workplace Culture Policies: These policies promote a positive and inclusive workplace culture, where all employees feel valued and respected. This can involve establishing a code of conduct, providing employee resource groups, promoting open communication, and offering employee feedback mechanisms.

By implementing these and other types of diversity and inclusion policies, organizations can create a workplace that values and respects all employees, promotes fairness and equal opportunities, and fosters a positive and inclusive culture.

2.4.2 Diversity and Inclusion Policies that Can Lead to Conflict

Ololube and Egbezor (2020), opined that while diversity and inclusion policies are designed to promote a more equitable and inclusive workplace, there are situations where they can lead to conflicts. Here are some examples of diversity and inclusion policies that can lead to conflicts:

Affirmative Action Policies: Affirmative action policies are designed to promote equal opportunities for underrepresented groups, such as women, racial minorities, and individuals with disabilities. However, some employees may feel that these policies give preferential treatment to certain groups, leading to resentment and conflict.

Religious Accommodation Policies: While religious accommodation policies are designed to promote religious diversity and respect for different beliefs, they can sometimes lead to conflicts if they clash with the needs of the business or other employees. For example, accommodating an employee's request for time off for a religious holiday may disrupt the workflow and lead to resentment from other employees.

Gender Pronoun Policies: Gender pronoun policies require employees to use preferred pronouns for individuals who identify as non-binary or transgender. However, some employees may feel uncomfortable or resistant to using these pronouns, leading to conflict and tension in the workplace.

Diversity Training Programs: While diversity training programs can be effective in promoting understanding and respect for different backgrounds and perspectives, they can also be seen as divisive or condescending by some employees, leading to conflict and resistance.

Diversity Metrics: Organizations may use diversity metrics to measure the success of their diversity and inclusion policies. However, if these metrics are used to compare employees or departments, they can lead to competition and resentment. It is important for organizations to anticipate and address potential conflicts that may arise from diversity and inclusion policies. By promoting open communication, providing opportunities for feedback and dialogue, and addressing conflicts in a fair and respectful manner, organizations can navigate potential conflicts and promote a more positive and inclusive workplace culture.

2.4.3 Identifying Conflict

According to Loewen (2018), identifying conflicts is an essential first step in managing and resolving them effectively. A conflict is defined as a disagreement or clash between two or more parties over different interests, values, or needs. Identifying conflicts can be challenging because conflicts often emerge in subtle ways, and their underlying causes may not be apparent at first glance. However, understanding the nature of the conflict and the parties involved is crucial to finding solutions and preventing conflicts from escalating. Also, the first step in identifying conflicts is to determine the parties involved. Parties can be individuals, groups, or organizations. Each party has its own set of interests, needs, and values that may conflict with those of the other party. Understanding the parties involved is crucial in identifying the root cause of the conflict. For instance, a conflict between two individuals in a workplace may have a different cause than a conflict between two departments in the same organization. The second step is to determine the issues at the center of the conflict. What are the issues that the parties disagree about? The issues could be related to work tasks, roles, responsibilities, resources, or interpersonal relationships. Identifying the issues can help us understand the underlying concerns and interests of each party. For example, a conflict between two colleagues over the allocation of work tasks may reveal that one colleague feels overburdened and underappreciated, while the other may feel that they are not being given enough responsibility. The third step is to identify the positions of each party on the issues. Positions are often expressed as demands, wants, or needs. Identifying the positions can help us see the differences and similarities between the parties. For example, in a negotiation, it is essential to identify each party's position on the issue to find common ground and reach an agreement that satisfies both parties.

The fourth step is to analyze the communication between the parties. What is the tone of communication between the parties? Is there a lot of anger, frustration, or misunderstanding? Are there any patterns in the communication that indicate the parties are not understanding each other? Communication plays a significant role in conflicts, and often conflicts arise from

misunderstandings or miscommunication. Therefore, it is essential to analyze the communication to identify the root cause of the conflict. The fifth step is to look for power imbalances between the parties. Power imbalances occur when one party has more resources, influence, or authority than the other. These imbalances can create tension and conflict. For example, a conflict between an employee and their supervisor may arise from a power imbalance, where the supervisor has more authority over the employee. The sixth step is to consider the history of the conflict. Is there a history of conflict between the parties? Understanding the history can help us see patterns and recurring issues that need to be addressed. For example, a history of conflict between two departments in an organization may indicate that there are systemic issues that need to be addressed, rather than just a one-off conflict.

Identifying conflicts is crucial because it helps us understand the root cause of the conflict and develop strategies to resolve it effectively. Failure to identify conflicts can lead to the escalation of the conflict, damaging relationships, and lowering productivity. Furthermore, identifying conflicts early can help prevent conflicts from arising in the first place by addressing the underlying issues. In conclusion, identifying conflicts is a crucial first step in managing and resolving conflicts effectively. By following the steps outlined in this essay, we can understand the parties involved, the issues at the center of the conflict, the positions of each party, the communication patterns, power imbalances, and the history of the conflict. Identifying conflicts allows us to find solutions that satisfy the needs of all parties involved, prevent conflicts from escalating, and maintain positive relationships (Jehn, Northcraft & Neale, 2019).

2.4.4 Strategy for Managing Diversity

Managing diversity refers to creating an inclusive work environment that values and respects the differences among employees. It involves recognizing, acknowledging, and leveraging individual differences to enhance workplace culture, increase creativity and innovation, and drive business success. In this essay, I will discuss the importance of managing diversity and some strategies for achieving it. Managing diversity is essential for creating a positive work environment that is

inclusive and respectful of all individuals. When employees feel valued and respected, they are more likely to be engaged and motivated to perform their best work. A diverse workplace can also provide a range of perspectives and ideas, leading to increased creativity and innovation. Managing diversity is also important for attracting and retaining talent. In today's global economy, businesses must compete for talent from a diverse pool of candidates. Companies that demonstrate a commitment to diversity and inclusion are more likely to attract top talent and retain employees who feel valued and respected (Milliken & Martins, 2019).

Furthermore, creating a diverse workforce is the first step in managing diversity. This involves recruiting and hiring individuals from a range of backgrounds and experiences. To do this effectively, companies should develop recruiting strategies that target diverse candidates and ensure that hiring processes are free from bias. Also, an organization that seeks to manage diversity to avoid conflict must develop a culture of inclusion. Creating a culture of inclusion involves promoting respect, equity, and fairness in the workplace. This can be achieved by establishing clear policies and guidelines for behavior, providing training on diversity and inclusion, and holding employees accountable for their actions.

Accordingly, Cox (2017), noted that fostering communication and collaboration also remains one of the best ways of managing diversities among employees. This involves creating opportunities for employees to share their perspectives and ideas, such as through team-building exercises, cross-functional projects, and open-door policies. Also, Providing training and development opportunities for all employees is essential for managing diversity. This can include cultural competency training, mentoring programs, and leadership development programs that promote diversity and inclusion.

Also, Studies like that of Ayoko and Konrad (2019) suggests that supporting work-life balance is important for managing diversity. This is done by creating flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting or flexible hours, that allow employees to balance their personal and professional responsibilities. In addition, Monitoring and evaluating progress is essential for ensuring that diversity and inclusion efforts are effective. This involves collecting data on diversity and inclusion

metrics, such as workforce demographics, employee satisfaction, and turnover rates, and using this data to identify areas for improvement.

Managing diversity is essential for creating a positive work environment that values and respects the differences among employees. To achieve this, companies must develop strategies for creating a diverse workforce, fostering a culture of inclusion, promoting communication and collaboration, providing training and development, supporting work-life balance, and monitoring and evaluating progress. By effectively managing diversity, companies can create a more engaged and motivated workforce, drive innovation and creativity, and attract and retain top talent.

2.4.5 Strategies for Managing Conflict

Conflict is an inevitable part of life, and it can arise in any situation where two or more parties have differing opinions, interests, or values. The key to managing conflict effectively is to find a solution that meets the needs of all parties involved while maintaining positive relationships. Oluwafemi (2020), highlighted some of the strategies for managing conflict as follows:

Communication: Communication is critical in managing conflict. Effective communication can help parties understand each other's perspectives and find common ground. It is essential to listen actively to the other party's concerns and express oneself clearly and respectfully. Open and honest communication can help resolve misunderstandings and prevent conflicts from escalating.

Collaboration: Collaboration involves working together to find a solution that meets the needs of all parties involved. It involves sharing information, brainstorming solutions, and seeking consensus. Collaboration can help build trust and improve relationships between parties.

Compromise: Compromise involves finding a solution that partially meets the needs of both parties. It requires both parties to give up something to reach a solution. Compromise can help resolve conflicts when both parties are willing to make concessions.

Avoidance: Avoidance involves choosing not to engage in the conflict. It can be an effective strategy when the issue is not important, and the parties involved have a good relationship.

However, avoidance can also be a negative strategy when it is used to avoid difficult conversations or when the issue is important and needs to be addressed.

Accommodation: Accommodation involves one party sacrificing their needs or interests to meet the needs of the other party. It can be an effective strategy when the issue is not important to the accommodating party, or when they want to maintain positive relationships. However, it can also lead to resentment and a loss of trust.

Competition: Competition involves pursuing one's own interests at the expense of the other party's interests. It can be an effective strategy when the issue is important, and both parties are equally invested in the outcome. However, it can also lead to an escalation of the conflict and damage relationships.

Mediation: Mediation involves bringing in a neutral third party to help parties find a solution to the conflict. The mediator facilitates communication, helps parties identify underlying issues, and assists in finding a mutually agreeable solution. Mediation can be an effective strategy when parties are unable to resolve the conflict on their own.

Managing conflict effectively requires understanding the nature of the conflict and the parties involved. Strategies for managing conflict include communication, collaboration, compromise, avoidance, accommodation, competition, and mediation. Each strategy has its advantages and disadvantages, and the choice of strategy will depend on the situation and the parties involved. By finding a solution that meets the needs of all parties involved, we can resolve conflicts and maintain positive relationships.

2.4.6 Implementing Conflict Resolution Techniques

Oyebisi and Oladipo (2018), in a study of managing conflict through diversity asserts that conflict resolution techniques are designed to help individuals and groups resolve disputes in a way that satisfies the needs of all parties involved. Implementing these techniques requires a deliberate

and systematic approach to managing conflict. Strategies for implementing conflict resolution techniques are as follows:

Identify the source of the conflict: The first step in implementing conflict resolution techniques is to identify the source of the conflict. This involves understanding the underlying issues that are causing the dispute. By identifying the source of the conflict, individuals and groups can focus their efforts on finding a solution that addresses the root cause of the problem.

Define the problem: Once the source of the conflict has been identified, it is important to define the problem in clear and concise terms. This helps to avoid misunderstandings and ensures that all parties involved have a clear understanding of the issue at hand.

Develop a plan: Developing a plan involves identifying the goals and objectives of the conflict resolution process. This involves setting clear and measurable goals, defining the steps needed to achieve those goals, and identifying the resources required to implement the plan.

Implement the plan: Implementing the plan involves taking action to resolve the conflict. This can involve a variety of techniques, such as negotiation, mediation, or arbitration. It is important to remain flexible and open to different approaches as the situation evolves.

Evaluate the results: Evaluating the results of the conflict resolution process is essential to determining the effectiveness of the approach. This involves measuring progress against the goals and objectives set out in the plan, and identifying areas for improvement.

Learn from the experience: Conflict resolution is an ongoing process, and it is important to learn from the experience. This involves reflecting on what worked well and what did not, and using this information to improve future conflict resolution efforts.

Implementing conflict resolution techniques requires a deliberate and systematic approach. This involves identifying the source of the conflict, defining the problem, developing a plan, implementing the plan, evaluating the results, and learning from the experience. By following these steps, individuals and groups can effectively manage conflict and find solutions that satisfy the needs of all parties involved.

Conclusion

Managing conflicts arising from diversity and inclusion policies at the workplace is a complex and ongoing process. It requires a deliberate and systematic approach to addressing issues related to discrimination, bias, and exclusion. By promoting diversity and inclusion, companies can create a positive work environment that values and respects the differences among employees, leading to increased engagement, motivation, and innovation. To effectively manage conflicts arising from diversity and inclusion policies, companies must develop strategies for identifying the root causes of conflicts, defining the problem in clear terms, developing a plan to address the issue, implementing the plan, evaluating the results, and learning from the experience. This involves creating a culture of inclusion, fostering communication and collaboration, providing training and development, supporting work-life balance, and monitoring and evaluating progress.

In conclusion, managing conflicts arising from diversity and inclusion policies is essential for creating a positive work environment that values and respects the differences among employees. By effectively managing conflicts, companies can promote diversity and inclusion, drive innovation and creativity, and attract and retain top talent. It is important for companies to embrace diversity and inclusion as a core value and commit to ongoing efforts to promote and sustain these values.

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