



# **International Journal of Multidisciplinary and Scientific Emerging Research (IJMSERH)**

**Volume 13, Issue 3, July-September 2025**

**Impact Factor: 9.274**



# A Study on Diversity and Inclusion at Manufacturing Unit of TAFE, Chennai

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**ABSTRACT:** This study focuses on understanding and analysing the current state of diversity and inclusion (D&I) in a manufacturing unit. In today's competitive and evolving industrial environment, building a diverse workforce and promoting an inclusive culture are not just ethical responsibilities but strategic advantages. Diversity refers to the presence of differences among individuals in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, education, experiences, and ways of thinking. Inclusion means creating a work environment where every employee feels respected, heard, and empowered to contribute regardless of their background.

The manufacturing industry, traditionally seen as male-dominated and less diverse, is now recognizing the value of embracing D&I to improve innovation, productivity, and employee satisfaction. This study examines how well diversity is represented in the workforce and how inclusive the organizational culture is. It also highlights the benefits of having a diverse and inclusive environment—such as better teamwork, stronger decision-making, higher employee morale, and improved business outcomes.

Through surveys, interviews, and observations, the research identifies key challenges in implementing D&I practices and offers suggestions and best practices that can help the unit build a more inclusive workplace. The study aims to provide valuable insights to management for making strategic improvements that enhance employee well-being, foster creativity, and strengthen overall organizational performance

**KEYWORDS:** Diversity and Inclusion (D&I), Manufacturing Industry, Workplace Culture, Employee Engagement, Organizational Performance, Gender Equality, Workforce Diversity, Inclusive Practices, Innovation, Strategic HR, Employee Well-being, Decision-making, Teamwork, Organizational Culture, Employee Satisfaction.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) have become core priorities in organizational strategies, including in the manufacturing industry, which has historically been male-dominated. With the rise of globalization, shifting labour markets, and evolving societal expectations, there is a growing emphasis on creating inclusive workspaces. DEI initiatives are designed to offer equitable opportunities, foster a sense of belonging, and empower employees to participate meaningfully in organizational success. Despite the backdrop of economic uncertainty, the manufacturing labour market remains strong, especially in the United States, which employs 13 million manufacturing workers and has recently seen its highest hiring growth since the 1980s. Yet, finding and retaining skilled workers continues to be a major challenge. Projections suggest that nearly 4 million manufacturing jobs will be required over the next decade, but 2.1 million of these roles may go unfilled unless organizations adopt inclusive hiring strategies.

As the U.S. becomes increasingly racially and culturally diverse, manufacturers must widen their talent search to meet growing demand. Increasing diversity in the workforce not only helps address skills shortages but also provides high-income opportunities to underrepresented populations. The Manufacturing Institute has taken a leadership role in this space by supporting companies with best DEI practices and raising awareness across the sector.

However, DEI in manufacturing is still lagging—only 29% of the global manufacturing workforce is female (ILO, 2020), and representation from ethnic minorities is also limited. Compared to IT and service sectors, manufacturing systemic challenges, cultural resistance and a lack of custom DEI frameworks. In India, the diversity in culture, language, and region adds complexity, highlighting the need for context-specific DEI strategies. Unfortunately, there is

limited literature on DEI in Indian manufacturing, especially from the viewpoint of HR professionals, who play a vital role in driving inclusion.

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess the level of diversity in the workforce at TAFE manufacturing unit, in terms of gender, age, educational background, socio-economic status, and other demographic variables.
- To examine employees' perceptions and attitudes towards diversity and inclusion in the workplace at TAFE.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of current diversity and inclusion practices and policies implemented at TAFE.
- To identify the challenges and barriers faced in promoting diversity and inclusion within the manufacturing work environment.
- To analyze the relationship between workplace diversity/inclusion and employee outcomes such as satisfaction, engagement, productivity, and retention.
- To provide practical recommendations to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion at TAFE for enhanced organizational performance and employee satisfaction.

## III. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

### ➤ Organizational Scope

Specific manufacturing unit: The study may focus on a particular manufacturing unit or facility.

Departmental scope: The study might explore diversity and inclusion within specific departments, such as production, HR, or engineering.

### ➤ Methodological Scope

Research design: The study may employ a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods approach.

Data collection methods: The study might use surveys, interviews, focus groups, or observations.

### ➤ Geographical Scope

Specific location: The study may focus on a manufacturing unit located in a particular region or country.

### ➤ Temporal Scope

Cross-sectional study: The study might capture a snapshot of diversity and inclusion at a particular point in time.

Longitudinal study: The study could explore changes in diversity and inclusion over time.

## IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Cox, T. (1994) – Cultural Diversity in Organizations: Theory, Research and Practice** Cox classified organizations as monolithic, plural, or multicultural based on their diversity practices. He found that multicultural organizations are more innovative and perform better. This model helps TAFE shift towards inclusive, high-performing teams in manufacturing

**Thomas, D. A., & Ely, R. J. (1996) – Making Differences Matter: A New Paradigm for Managing Diversity** Thomas and Ely's "learning-and-effectiveness" model highlights using diversity to boost performance, not just for compliance. It values inclusion, participation, and diverse perspectives. For TAFE, this approach can improve teamwork, satisfaction, and reduce turnover.

### **Shore, L. M., et al. (2011) – Inclusion and Diversity in Work Groups: A Review and Model for**

**Future Research** Shore and colleagues described inclusion as making employees feel both accepted and valued for their individuality. This approach enhances teamwork and job satisfaction. In TAFE's manufacturing setup, it helps balance standard procedures with personal strengths for better outcomes

**Lynn M. Shore (2011)** the researcher proposes that jointly considering both belongingness & uniqueness through inclusion premises to advance research & practice in the area of diversity.

**Robinson, G., & Dechant, K. (1997) – Building a Business Case for Diversity** Robinson and Dechant found that diversity boosts creativity, decision-making, and problem-solving. These benefits appear only when backed by an

inclusive, supportive culture. In manufacturing settings like TAFE, inclusion helps turn diversity into strength. Empowering employees and valuing their input is key

**Patrick, H. A., & Kumar, V. R. (2012) – Managing Workplace Diversity: Issues and Challenges** This Indian study examined workplace diversity in manufacturing and service sectors, highlighting challenges like cultural resistance and communication barriers. It emphasized the need to align diversity strategies with organizational goals

**Nishii, L. H. (2013) – “The Benefits of Climate for Inclusion for Gender-Diverse Groups”** Nishii introduced the concept of a “climate for inclusion,” where employees perceive fair treatment and respect for differences. Her study showed that such climates boost engagement, especially in diverse teams

## V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology refers to the structured plan and approach used to conduct a study in a systematic and objective manner. It outlines the tools, techniques, and procedures adopted for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. In this study, the research methodology defines how data on **Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) practices** at the **TAFE Manufacturing Unit** was obtained, measured, and evaluated. The aim is to ensure that the study is scientifically grounded, logically consistent, and capable of yielding valid, reliable, and actionable conclusions based on employee responses.

The study is based on a descriptive research design, which is suitable for assessing current practices, employee perceptions, and policy effectiveness. This design enables the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data to analyze trends, identify gaps, and understand the overall effectiveness of D&I initiatives at TAFE.

### Sources of Data

- **Primary Data:** Primary data was collected through structured questionnaires distributed among employees of TAFE. The questionnaire included both close-ended and Likert scale questions, aimed at understanding employee awareness, participation, and perception regarding diversity and inclusion practices in the organization.
- **Secondary Data:** Secondary data was obtained from a variety of sources such as:
  - Academic journals and research publications
  - Government labor and HR policy reports
  - Company documents and internal HR records
  - Websites and industry case studies

These sources were used to build a strong theoretical framework, understand current D&I practices in the manufacturing sector, and identify research gaps.

### Sampling Design

- **Sampling Unit:** The sampling unit consisted of individual employees working at the TAFE Manufacturing Unit, including:
  - Administrative staff
  - Line managers
  - Shop-floor and support personnel

These employees represented different departments, age groups, educational levels, and roles—ensuring a broad and inclusive respondent base.

- **Sample Size:** A total of 200 respondents were selected for the study. The sample was designed to reflect the organization’s diverse workforce and capture a wide range of perspectives across functional and hierarchical levels.
- **Sampling Technique:** A stratified sampling method was employed to ensure proportional representation of employees from various segments of the company. This technique helps in reducing bias and improving the accuracy of the findings.

### Data Collection Tools

The primary tool used for data collection was a structured questionnaire, which included:

- Demographic details
- Perceptions of workplace diversity and inclusion
- Participation in D&I training

- Opinions on inclusivity, decision-making, and workplace equity

The questionnaire was pre-tested for clarity and refined based on initial feedback before being administered to the full sample.

#### Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, including:

- Percentage analysis for response distribution
- Cross-tabulation for comparative insights
- Graphical representations such as bar graphs and pie charts to visualize patterns

This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the current D&I landscape within TAFE and supported the formulation of actionable suggestions.

Secondary data were collected from academic journals, research articles, HR policies, government reports, and websites to support the theoretical framework of the study. Additionally, internal records and HR documents from TAFE were reviewed to understand existing D&I practices. These sources provided contextual background and helped in identifying research gaps specific to the manufacturing sector.

## VI. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted among employees of TAFE Company, with 100% of the respondents being male. The purpose was to understand employee demographics, perceptions of diversity and inclusion (D&I) practices, and overall workplace environment. The following key findings emerged from the data:

### 1. Demographic Profile

- Gender Composition: All respondents were male, indicating a lack of gender diversity in the surveyed sample.
- Age Distribution:
  - 45% of the employees were aged 45 and above,
  - 33.3% belonged to the 20–25 age group,
  - 20% were between 36–45 years, and
  - 16.7% were in the 26–35 age group.
- Educational Qualification:
  - 75% of respondents held a Bachelor's degree,
  - 25% had completed only a High School Diploma.
- Employment Type:
  - 50% of the employees held permanent positions,
  - The remaining 50% were employed on a temporary basis.

### 2. Workplace Diversity and Perception

- Perceived Workplace Diversity:
  - 60% of respondents viewed the workplace as diverse,
  - 40% disagreed, indicating a moderate level of diversity acceptance.
- Involvement in Decision-Making:
  - 65% felt involved in the organizational decision-making process,
  - 35% did not feel included in such activities.
- Perception of D&I Values:
  - 60% believed the organization values diverse perspectives,
  - 40% disagreed, showing that D&I efforts may not be consistently recognized by all employees.
- Participation in D&I Training:
  - A high majority (90%) had attended Diversity & Inclusion training,
  - 10% had not participated in any D&I sessions.

### 3. Feedback and Communication

- **Regular Feedback:**
  - 75% of employees reported receiving regular feedback from supervisors,
  - 25% did not, highlighting scope for improvement in employee engagement practices.

### 4. Workplace Environment and Culture

- Perception of Work Environment:
  - 55% of employees described the environment as negative,
  - 45% perceived it as positive, indicating mixed feelings about the organizational culture.
- Recommendation Based on D&I Practices:
  - 65% of employees would recommend TAFE based on its diversity and inclusion efforts,
  - 35% would not, showing the importance of strengthening visible and inclusive HR policies.
- Perceived Impact of D&I Initiatives:
  - 50% remained neutral regarding the impact of D&I on the work environment,
  - 30% agreed that it has a positive effect, while 20% disagreed.

### 5. Decision-Making and Inclusion

- A follow-up response revealed that 55% of the respondents do not believe they are involved in the company's decision-making,
  - while 45% feel they are, indicating a disconnect in participatory practices.

### 6. Overall Perception of D&I Impact

- A substantial majority (80%) believed that diversity and inclusion positively impact the organization,
  - while 20% disagreed, suggesting room for better visibility and integration of D&I policies into everyday operations.

### 7. Summary of Additional Table-Based Responses

- 60% of respondents in one table agreed on D&I's presence in the company, 40% disagreed.
- 55% confirmed specific D&I actions in place, while 45% denied.
- Another table revealed 70% of respondents recognized the existence of diversity-related efforts, while 30% did not.
- 90% affirmed participation in certain D&I programs, showing high involvement in formal training initiatives.

## VII. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the key findings of the study conducted at TAFE, Perambur, the following strategic recommendations are proposed to strengthen the organization's diversity, inclusion, and employee well-being initiatives. These suggestions aim to create a more equitable, engaging, and performance-driven work environment:

### Implement Diverse Hiring Practices

TAFE should actively recruit individuals from varied genders, age groups, educational qualifications, and socio-economic backgrounds. A more inclusive hiring strategy will help achieve balanced representation across departments and levels, fostering innovation and employee engagement.

### Foster an Inclusive Workplace Culture

It is vital to cultivate a culture where respect, equity, and openness are embedded into daily interactions. Employees, regardless of their background or job role, should feel welcomed, supported, and valued. Leadership must set the tone by modeling inclusive behavior.

### Conduct Regular D&I Training and Awareness Programs

To address unconscious biases and improve team collaboration, TAFE should organize periodic workshops focused on:

- Diversity awareness
- Inclusive communication
- Unconscious

bias

These sessions should be interactive, mandatory, and followed by feedback assessments to gauge impact.

### Ensure Equal Opportunities for Growth and Development

The company should review its **promotion and career development policies** to ensure that advancement is based on merit and potential rather than favoritism or systemic bias. Priority should be given to unrepresented groups by offering them leadership development pathways and mentoring opportunities.

### Introduce a Robust Feedback and Grievance Mechanism

TAFE must establish a confidential grievance redressal system that empowers employees to report discrimination, harassment, or exclusion without fear of retaliation. The system should include:

- Anonymity assurance
- Timely resolution framework
- Regular tracking and reporting to HR leadership

### Enhance Accessibility and Workplace Accommodations

To build a truly inclusive space, the company should:

- Make physical infrastructure accessible (e.g., ramps, ergonomic workstations)
- Digitally enable access for all through screen-reader-compatible tools and inclusive platforms
- Provide accommodations for employees with disabilities or special needs

### Recruit and Retain Skilled Blue-Collar Talent

Special emphasis should be placed on recruiting diverse blue-collar employees—particularly from economically or socially marginalized communities. To retain skilled labor:

- Offer longer employment contracts
- Ensure safe working conditions
- Provide clear paths for skill upgrades and promotions

### Enhance Employee Welfare and Well-Being Facilities

A holistic D&I strategy must also include employee wellness initiatives, such as:

- Access to mental health counseling and occupational healthcare
- Flexible work hours or remote options, where feasible
- Recreational and stress-relief amenities (e.g., activity rooms, mindfulness sessions)
- Annual well-being surveys to monitor and improve workplace satisfaction

## VIII. CONCLUSION

This three-month study highlights the transformative potential of strategically implementing **Diversity and Inclusion (D&I)** practices within the manufacturing sector, with a specific focus on the **TAFE Manufacturing Unit**. The findings demonstrate that fostering an inclusive workplace—characterized by equity, mutual respect, and open communication—can significantly enhance employee morale, engagement, and overall organizational efficiency.

The research confirms that D&I initiatives do more than fulfill ethical and social obligations; they are a business-critical strategy. Organizations that embrace diversity and create inclusive environments benefit from higher productivity, improved collaboration, and increased innovation. The presence of inclusive practices is directly correlated with a more empowered workforce, stronger retention, and a healthier workplace culture.

- **Implement regular D&I training programs** to increase awareness and reduce unconscious bias.
- **Adopt inclusive recruitment and promotion policies** to ensure fair representation across all job roles and levels.
- **Establish open and accessible feedback mechanisms** so that employees feel valued, heard, and supported.

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