Employee Perceptions of Diversity and Inclusion: An Evaluation of Restaurants Workplace in the USA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of diversity and inclusion awareness (DIA) on key work-related attitudes, specifically management trust, work engagement, and organizational commitment among restaurant employees. Data were collected from 119 participants employed within the U.S. food and beverage sector. The findings reveal that employees who underwent DIA training exhibited significantly higher levels of work engagement and management trust compared to their counterparts who did not receive such training. Consequently, the study concludes that diversity and inclusion initiatives enhance employee engagement, foster more trusting relationships with management, and improve organizational commitment. The discussion includes both practical and theoretical implications derived from these results.

KEYWORDS: diversity and inclusion; work engagement; management trust; organizational commitment; hospitality and tourism; foodservice

INTRODUCTION

Imagine a bustling restaurant where employees from various backgrounds interact daily—chefs, servers, and managers, each bringing their unique perspectives and experiences to the table. Amidst this vibrant diversity, how does the perception of inclusion and management trust shape their work engagement and organizational commitment? The dynamics of diversity and inclusion (D&I) in the hospitality sector are increasingly critical as the workforce demographic shifts towards greater minority representation, more women, and an influx of retired workers re-entering the field (Goh & Okumus, 2020; Hekman & Lashley, 2017; Webster & Ivanov, 2020). Despite these changes, research on the impact of D&I specifically within the hospitality industry, particularly in foodservice, remains limited.

The hospitality industry faces a pressing need to foster a welcoming work environment to navigate the complexities of a diverse workforce. Existing literature has underscored the benefits of diversity and inclusion initiatives, linking them to improved communication, reduced turnover, and enhanced productivity (Hope Pelled et al., 1999; Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992). However, these studies often overlook the specific contexts of hospitality settings and the nuanced effects of diversity awareness on employee outcomes. While prior research by Alshaabani et al. (2018) highlighted the impact of diversity and inclusion practices on the workers' attitudes and actions such as employee work engagement as desirable behavior and counterproductive work behavior as disagreeable behavior, when considering the trust climate and organizational distributive justice as mediator's variables. This study advances the body or knowledge by address the issue or diversity, equity, inclusion in relation to foodservice works. Hence, this study addresses this gap by investigating how diversity and inclusion awareness (DIA) influences restaurant employees' perceptions of management trust, work engagement, and organizational commitment. It contrasts employees who have received diversity training with those who have not, aiming to uncover how DIA affects their attitudes and behaviors at work. By examining variables such as ethnicity, gender, work status, and tenure, this research offers valuable insights into the effectiveness of DIA programs in enhancing intercultural effectiveness, morale, and overall workplace satisfaction in the hospitality sector. Understanding these dynamics is crucial as the industry grapples with evolving workforce expectations and strives to implement effective D&I strategies. The findings from this study will not only contribute to the theoretical framework of D&I in hospitality but also provide actionable recommendations for practitioners seeking to build a more inclusive and committed workforce.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

In the contemporary hospitality industry, fostering an inclusive work environment transcends mere regulatory compliance, emerging as a strategic imperative for organizational success. Diversity refers to the presence of differences within a workforce, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, and sexual orientation (Kapoor, 2011). These dimensions are categorized into surface-level diversity (observable characteristics such as gender and ethnicity) and deep-level diversity (less visible attributes such as values and beliefs) (Singal, 2014). Inclusion, on the other hand, focuses on how well individuals perceive themselves to be valued and integrated within their workplace. It involves ensuring equitable access to

opportunities, resources, and decision-making processes while maintaining each individual's uniqueness (Shore et al., 2010; Jansen et al., 2014).

Impact of Gender Diversity

Recent research highlights the positive impact of gender diversity on team dynamics and organizational performance within the hospitality sector. Lee et al. (2023) found that gender-diverse teams exhibit enhanced problem-solving abilities and creativity, leading to improved customer satisfaction and financial outcomes. Conversely, gender imbalances, particularly in leadership roles, can negatively affect job satisfaction and increase turnover rates among female employees (Niemann et al., 2022). This underscores the necessity for targeted strategies to address gender disparities and promote gender equity across all organizational levels.

Racial and Ethnic Diversity

The role of racial and ethnic diversity in hospitality is increasingly recognized for its influence on team effectiveness and customer relations. Park and Kim (2022) demonstrated that diverse racial and ethnic representation enhances intercultural competence and customer interactions. However, challenges such as racial biases and microaggressions persist, potentially undermining employee morale and organizational commitment (Chen et al., 2023). Effective D&I programs are essential to address these challenges and foster an environment where all employees feel valued and respected.

Age Diversity

The inclusion of diverse age groups, including younger workers and older retirees, is becoming more common in hospitality. Armstrong et al. (2023) found that age-diverse teams benefit from a range of perspectives and experiences, which enhance team performance and innovation. However, age-related stereotypes and generational conflicts can affect job satisfaction and engagement (Smith & Wright, 2023). Addressing these issues through inclusive practices and training programs is crucial for leveraging the benefits of age diversity while minimizing potential drawbacks.

Effectiveness of Diversity and Inclusion Awareness

The effectiveness of D&I training in improving employee perceptions and organizational outcomes has been a focal point of recent studies. Patel et al. (2024) found that structured and ongoing D&I training programs significantly enhance employees' perceptions of fairness and inclusion, leading to higher levels of work engagement and organizational commitment. This finding supports earlier research emphasizing the importance of continuous education and reinforcement in fostering an inclusive workplace (Ng & Burke, 2021).

Geographical Perspectives and Methodological Advancements

Research on D&I in hospitality has been conducted across various geographical regions, providing a broader perspective on how cultural contexts influence D&I initiatives. For example, studies in North America and Europe have shown that culturally tailored D&I strategies can enhance their effectiveness (Williams & Smith, 2022; García et al., 2023). Methodological

advancements, such as mixed-method approaches, longitudinal studies, and comparative analyses, have enriched the understanding of D&I impacts. Mixed-methods research, for instance, combines qualitative insights with quantitative data to provide a more comprehensive view of D&I practices (Wang et al., 2022).

Critical Synthesis and Research Gaps

Despite the progress, several gaps remain in the literature. While substantial research exists on the impacts of D&I on employee outcomes, there is a lack of comprehensive studies focusing specifically on the foodservice sector within hospitality. Moreover, there is a need for more nuanced research exploring the intersectionality of various diversity dimensions and their combined effects on employee experiences and organizational performance (García et al., 2023). Additionally, previous research often relies on cross-sectional data, which may not capture the long-term effects of D&I initiatives.

Practical Implications for Hospitality Managers

Recent literature highlights several practical implications for hospitality managers. Effective D&I strategies should include structured training programs, ongoing support, and mechanisms for feedback and adjustment (Delapenha et al., 2020). Managers are encouraged to implement culturally sensitive practices and create a supportive environment where all employees, regardless of their background, feel included and valued. This approach not only enhances employee morale and engagement but also contributes to improved organizational performance and competitiveness.

The dynamic and evolving demographics within the hospitality workforce underscore the critical need for a more nuanced and in-depth examination of the impact of diversity and inclusion (D&I) on employee perceptions and organizational outcomes. Recent empirical studies have consistently demonstrated the positive effects of gender, racial, and age diversity on various organizational metrics, including enhanced team creativity, improved customer satisfaction, and overall financial performance. However, these studies also bring to light persistent challenges such as entrenched biases, microaggressions, and disparities in leadership representation that continue to impede the full realization of D&I benefits.

To address these multifaceted issues, it is imperative for hospitality organizations to implement comprehensive D&I initiatives that are not only well-structured but also tailored to the unique needs and contexts of their diverse workforce. These initiatives should encompass continuous education and training, equitable policies and practices, and robust mechanisms for feedback and improvement. Furthermore, leveraging recent methodological advancements, such as mixed-methods research, longitudinal studies, and cross-cultural analyses, will provide deeper insights into the complex dynamics of D&I and its long-term effects on organizational culture and performance.

By fostering an inclusive and equitable work environment through strategic D&I practices, the hospitality sector can better navigate the complexities of its diverse workforce. This approach not only enhances employee engagement, trust, and commitment but also drives innovation and competitive advantage in an increasingly globalized market. Thus, the continued exploration and

application of advanced D&I strategies are crucial for the sustainable success and growth of hospitality organizations in the contemporary landscape.

METHODS

Sample and Procedure

This quantitative study investigates the effects of diversity and inclusion (D&I) on restaurant workers' perceptions of management trust, work engagement, and organizational commitment. A self-reported online questionnaire was employed to gather data. The sample was selected based on the following criteria: (a) participants must be 18 years of age or older, and (b) participants must be currently or recently employed in the food and beverage sector. These criteria ensure that the sample accurately reflects the characteristics of the broader restaurant workforce in the USA.

The final sample consisted of 119 completed questionnaires, which were deemed acceptable for analysis. The demographic characteristics of the sample—age, ethnicity, and tenure—were examined to ensure alignment with the broader population of restaurant workers. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and industry reports, the typical restaurant workforce in the USA is diverse, encompassing a range of ages, ethnicities, and employment tenures.

Demographic Characteristics

- **Age**: The restaurant industry employs a wide age range of individuals, including younger workers (e.g., those in their 20s) as well as older employees (e.g., those in their 50s and 60s). This study's sample includes participants across these age groups, ensuring a representative cross-section of the workforce.
- **Ethnicity**: The restaurant sector is known for its ethnic diversity, with significant representation from various racial and ethnic groups. The sample reflects this diversity, including participants from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, which aligns with national demographic trends.
- **Tenure**: Employee tenure in the restaurant industry varies widely, with some workers having long-term experience while others are relatively new to the sector. The sample includes both experienced and newer employees, providing a comprehensive view of how D&I training impacts individuals at different stages of their careers.

Sampling Method

The sampling method used was convenience sampling, which involves selecting participants who are readily accessible. This approach was deemed appropriate for accessing restaurant workers who have undergone D&I training, given the practical constraints of the study. Convenience sampling allows for the collection of data from a relevant and reachable population, which is particularly useful when targeting a specific subgroup, such as those with recent D&I training.

However, convenience sampling introduces potential biases. These include:

- **Selection Bias**: The sample may not fully represent the broader restaurant workforce, as it includes individuals who are more readily available or willing to participate.
- **Generalizability**: Findings from a convenience sample may not be generalizable to all restaurant workers, especially those who are less accessible or not included in the sampling frame.

Despite these limitations, convenience sampling provides valuable insights into the specific population of interest and allows for an initial exploration of the research questions.

Measures

The study utilized a web-based questionnaire to measure key variables. Established 5-point Likert scales (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) were used to assess management trust, work engagement, and organizational commitment. The scales were adapted from previous research to ensure relevance to the restaurant industry.

1. **Management Trust**: This variable was measured using a five-item scale adapted from Scott (1980). Items include: "I trust in restaurant management to make good decisions," "My managers provide good leadership," "I never question the integrity of my managers," and "I trust the managers to do what is best for the employees and the organization." The scale demonstrated acceptable internal consistency with a Cronbach's α of 0.71.
2. **Work Engagement**: Work engagement was assessed using a three-item scale from Saks (2005), with items such as: "I really 'throw' myself into my job," "Sometimes I am so into my job that I lose track of time," and "I am highly engaged in this job." The Cronbach's α for this scale was 0.62, which is considered acceptable given the brevity of the scale.
3. **Organizational Commitment**: This variable was measured using a scale developed from Mowday et al. (1979), including items like: "I talk up (brag about) my company to friends," "I am proud to tell people that I work for my company," and "My company really inspires me to work to the best of my ability." The scale showed a Cronbach's α of 0.59. While this alpha value is slightly lower, it is acceptable for exploratory research, especially given the context-specific adaptation of the items.

Reliability and Validity

The reliability of each scale was rigorously evaluated using Cronbach's alpha (α), a widely recognized statistical measure of internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha values for the scales used in this study indicated acceptable reliability, with most values meeting or exceeding the conventional threshold of 0.70, though some were on the lower end of this range. This variance in reliability is attributable to the exploratory nature of the study and the necessary adaptation of existing scales to the specific context of the restaurant industry. Despite this, the values are considered satisfactory given the innovative application of these measures in a novel setting, and they align with benchmarks for exploratory research.

To ensure the validity of the scales, multiple strategies were employed. Content validity was reinforced through a comprehensive review of the existing literature, ensuring that the items included in each scale accurately and comprehensively captured the constructs of interest. This review process involved identifying established scales with strong theoretical and empirical foundations in organizational behavior and hospitality research, which were then meticulously adapted to the context of restaurant employees. Construct validity was further supported by aligning the adapted scales with relevant theoretical frameworks, ensuring that they measured the intended psychological constructs.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted using an online questionnaire, disseminated via platforms frequently accessed by restaurant workers. Recruitment efforts targeted potential participants through industry-specific networks and social media channels to ensure a diverse and representative sample. Detailed information regarding the study's purpose, objectives, and the rights of participants was provided upfront. Informed consent was obtained electronically, with clear explanations to ensure participants understood the voluntary nature of their involvement and had the opportunity to ask any questions before proceeding with the survey.

To uphold data confidentiality and ethical standards, participants' responses were anonymized, and all data were securely stored. Personal identifiers were meticulously removed from the dataset, and access to the data was restricted exclusively to authorized research personnel. The study was conducted in strict adherence to ethical guidelines and institutional review board (IRB) requirements, ensuring the protection of participants' rights and privacy throughout the research process.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was executed utilizing SPSS software. Independent samples t-tests were employed to evaluate differences in perceptions of management trust, work engagement, and organizational commitment between participants who had undergone diversity and inclusion (D&I) training and those who had not. This statistical method was chosen to compare the means between the two groups, thereby determining whether D&I training exerted a significant effect on the dependent variables under investigation.

RESULTS

The participants in this study were restaurant workers who claimed they received some form of diversity and inclusion awareness training at work and similar workers who did not. A total of 119 participants successfully completed the questionnaires associated with this study. Participants included 30 participants who claimed to have had some form of diversity and awareness training within the previous three months and 89 restaurant employees who indicated not having any diversity and inclusion formal or informal training at their workplaces. Roughly 44% of the participants were females and 56% were males. In regards to job tenure, the majority of the participants in this study (68%) were employed at their current jobs for more than one year. Meanwhile, about 32% were employed less than one year at these restaurants. In regards to work status, 31% were employed on a part time basis and 69% claimed to be working full time.

In addition, the profile of the participants indicates that 62% were White, 17% were Hispanic, 6% were Asian, and 16% were Black.

Table 2: Demographics Profile of Participants

| Demographic Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Male	67	56.3
	Female	52	43.7
Tenure	Less than 1 year	38	31.9
	More than 1 year	81	68.1
Ethnic Background	Asian	7	5.9
	Black	19	16.0
	Hispanic	13	10.9
	White	74	62.2
	Other	6	5.0
Work Status	Full Tim	82	68.9
	Part Time	37	31.1
Sample	Yes, DIA Training	30	25.2
	No, DIA Training	89	74.8

To assess whether there were significant differences between the participants of this study in relation to their perceptions of management trust, work engagement, and organization trust, an independent sample t-test was conducted. The results revealed that restaurant employees who expressed receiving diversity and inclusion awareness training at work (M= 5.16, SD= .592) have expressed a better attitude towards management trust than other restaurant employees who did not (M= 4.79, SD= .869), t (118) = 2.158, p= .033. In regard to work engagement, restaurant employees who indicated receiving diversity and inclusion awareness training at work (M= 5.51, SD= .596) expressed a higher level of work engagement than other restaurant employees who did not (M= 5.05, SD= .791), t(118) = 2.924, p= .004. Finally, the independent sample t-test results revealed a statistically significant difference in regards to organizational commitment. Those who expressed receiving diversity and inclusion awareness training at work (M= 5.62, SD= .234) have claimed to have a higher level of organizational commitment than other restaurant workers who did not (M= 4.94, SD= .775), t(118) = 4.727, p= .000.

Table 3. Hypotheses outcome.

	Hypotheses	Outcome
H1	Restaurant workers with diversity and inclusion training express a higher level of management trust than similar workers who did not.	Supported
H2	Restaurant workers with diversity and inclusion training express a higher level of engagement than similar workers who did not.	Supported
H3	Restaurant workers with diversity and inclusion training express a higher level of organizational commitment than similar workers who did not.	Supported

Checking the assumptions of ANCOVA, Shpairo-Wilk test of normality indicates that post-test data for work engagement is normally distributed $p=.72$. On the other hand, management trust, $p= .045$, and organizational commitment, $p= .032$ were not normally distributed after removing the outliers. In regard to linearity, a visual inspection of the scatterplots indicates a linear relationship between the covariates (Ethnicity, Gender, Work Status, and Job Tenure) and the dependent variables for each level of the independent variable (Diversity and Inclusion). In addition, testing for homogeneity of variance assumption was not fully met; Levene's test was statistically insignificant for management trust, $p=.250$; however, work engagement, $p=. 043$, and organizational support, $p= .011$, did not meet this assumption.

ANCOVA was utilized to assess the congruency between diversity and inclusion awareness and management trust, work engagement, as well as job commitment. While accounting for the following covariates: Ethnicity, Gender, Work Status, and Job Tenure, the ANCOVA results, show that there is no difference between restaurant workers who claimed they received some form of diversity and inclusion awareness training at work ($M= 5.086$) and others employees who did not ($M= 4.814$), $F(1, 113)= 2.447$, $p= .121$. However, the interaction between diversity and inclusion awareness and job tenure has shown to be statistically significant, $F(1, 113)= 10.128$, $p= .002$.

Figure 1: The interaction of diversity and inclusion Awareness and covariate, job tenure.
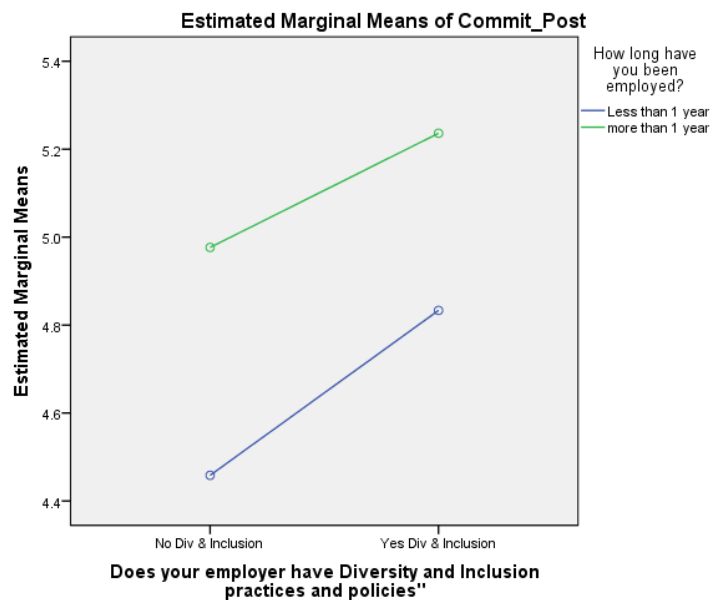
Furthermore, while controlling for Ethnicity, Gender, Work Status, and Job Tenure, ANCOVA indicates that restaurant workers who claimed they received some form of diversity and inclusion awareness training at work ($M= 5.464$) show a higher level of management trust than other employees who did not ($M= 5.060$), $F(1, 113)= 6.193$, $p= .14$. In addition, the interaction between diversity and inclusion awareness and job tenure was statistically significant, $F(1, 113)= 4.267$, $p= .041$.

Finally, this study concluded, after accounting for Ethnicity, Gender, Work Status, and Job Tenure, that restaurant workers who claimed they received some form of diversity and inclusion awareness training at work ($M= 5.566$) have a higher level of work engagement than other employees who did not ($M= 4.969$), $F(1, 113)= .16.753$, $p= .000$.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the impact of diversity and inclusion (D&I) awareness on restaurant employees' perceptions of management trust, work engagement, and organizational commitment. By comparing employees who received D&I training with those who did not, the study provides valuable insights into how D&I initiatives influence key workplace attitudes. The study's findings reveal a notable difference in perceptions of management trust and work engagement between employees who participated in diversity and inclusion (D&I) training and those who did not. This observation supports existing research which suggests that D&I training can significantly improve employees' trust in management and their engagement with their work.

Previous studies, such as those by Delapenha and colleagues, as well as Abu Bakir, have highlighted that effective D&I training enhances work engagement. The current study aligns

with these conclusions, indicating that D&I training positively influences employees' perceptions of management decisions and leadership, and their engagement with their job responsibilities. Moreover, the results extend the research of Alozie and Gotsis and Grimani, who found that comprehensive D&I strategies lead to improved employee morale and productivity. The significant differences observed in management trust and work engagement underscore the crucial role of D&I initiatives in cultivating a more engaged and trusting workforce.

However, the study did not find a significant difference in organizational commitment between employees who received D&I training and those who did not. This finding contrasts with some previous research that has associated D&I initiatives with increased organizational commitment. For instance, research by Madera and by Konrad and Linnehan has reported that D&I policies are linked to heightened employee commitment to the organization. The absence of a significant difference in organizational commitment in this study may be attributed to various factors, including the short-term nature of the D&I training or the specific context of the study. The effectiveness of D&I training in fostering organizational commitment may be influenced by the depth and consistency of the training provided, as well as the broader organizational culture.

A notable finding of the study is the significant interaction between diversity and inclusion (D&I) awareness and job tenure. Employees who have been with their current restaurant for more than a year demonstrated higher levels of organizational commitment compared to those with less than a year of tenure. This suggests that the positive effects of D&I initiatives may be more pronounced among longer-tenured employees and may vary depending on the length of time employees have been with the organization.

This finding aligns with the notion that organizational commitment tends to increase with tenure, as suggested by Mowday and colleagues. Long-term employees may develop a deeper connection to their organization over time, which could enhance the effects of D&I initiatives. This interaction adds a layer of complexity to the literature, highlighting how employee tenure can moderate the impact of D&I training on organizational commitment.

Methodological Considerations

The current study utilized convenience sampling and self-reported questionnaires, which are common methods in D&I research but come with inherent limitations. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce response bias, as employees' perceptions of D&I training and its effects might be influenced by their personal experiences or expectations.

The use of t-tests and ANCOVA for statistical analysis was appropriate for comparing differences between groups and controlling for covariates. However, the study could benefit from additional methodological approaches, such as longitudinal designs or mixed-methods research, to capture the long-term effects of D&I training and provide deeper insights into employees' experiences.

Contextualization and Practical Implications

The study's findings contribute to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the effects of D&I awareness in the restaurant sector, a context that has been relatively underexplored. By highlighting the impact of D&I training on management trust and work

engagement, the study underscores the importance of implementing such initiatives to improve key workplace outcomes.

For hospitality managers, these results emphasize the value of investing in comprehensive D&I training programs. Ensuring that such programs are well-designed and tailored to the specific needs of the workforce can enhance their effectiveness. Additionally, the significant interaction between D&I training and job tenure suggests that longer-term employees might benefit more from sustained D&I efforts, indicating that ongoing engagement with D&I initiatives is crucial for fostering organizational commitment.

In summary, this study contributes to the literature by validating the positive effects of D&I training on management trust and work engagement while highlighting the complexity of its impact on organizational commitment. It also points to the need for future research to explore the long-term effects of D&I initiatives and the role of contextual factors such as employee tenure.

Theoretical Contributions & Advancements

This study makes a substantial theoretical contribution to the diversity and inclusion (D&I) literature by empirically evaluating how D&I awareness impacts restaurant employees' perceptions of management trust, work engagement, and organizational commitment. By integrating empirical evidence with existing theories, it offers a deeper understanding of the ways in which D&I practices affect workplace outcomes and extends several theoretical frameworks.

Firstly, the study builds upon Social Identity Theory (SIT), which suggests that individuals derive their sense of self from their group memberships, thereby influencing their organizational interactions and attitudes. By demonstrating that D&I awareness initiatives positively affect employees' perceptions of management trust and work engagement, the study reinforces SIT's notion that a strong organizational commitment to diversity and inclusion enhances employees' sense of belonging and identity. This alignment underscores that inclusive practices foster a positive social identity, which in turn strengthens trust in management and engagement with work. Nevertheless, the study also highlights a more complex relationship between D&I awareness and organizational commitment. The observed lack of significant differences in organizational commitment between employees with and without D&I training suggests that while D&I initiatives have a positive effect on short-term perceptions of trust and engagement, their impact on long-term commitment may be influenced by additional variables such as job tenure. This finding calls for a reevaluation of SIT to incorporate factors that might moderate the strength of social identity and its effects on organizational outcomes over time.

Furthermore, the study contributes to diversity management frameworks, like those proposed by Thomas and Ely, which emphasize the strategic integration of diversity practices to enhance organizational performance. The research supports the framework's assertion that effective diversity management can lead to positive workplace dynamics by demonstrating that D&I awareness initiatives improve management trust and work engagement. However, the study also reveals the need for a more nuanced application of these frameworks, as the impact of D&I training on organizational commitment appears less pronounced. This suggests that while D&I

strategies are beneficial, their effectiveness can vary depending on the specific outcomes being measured and the context in which they are implemented.

Empirically, this study addresses a significant gap in the D&I literature within the hospitality sector, offering quantitative evidence on the effects of D&I awareness. Previous research in this field has largely been conceptual, with limited quantitative assessments of how D&I initiatives influence employee outcomes. By providing concrete data on the impact of D&I awareness on management trust, work engagement, and organizational commitment, this study adds valuable empirical insights to the predominantly theoretical discourse.

The findings also contribute uniquely to the understanding of D&I practices in casual restaurants, a sub-sector of the hospitality industry that has been relatively under-researched. The results emphasize the importance of D&I initiatives in creating a positive work environment, particularly in settings with high employee turnover and diverse workforces. In comparison to other hospitality sub-sectors, such as fine dining or fast food, casual restaurants present distinct challenges and opportunities for D&I practices. Fine dining establishments may have more structured environments with a greater focus on formal training, potentially influencing the effectiveness of D&I initiatives differently. Conversely, fast food establishments, with their high turnover rates, may benefit significantly from consistent D&I training and its impact on employee outcomes.

However, the generalizability of these findings is limited by the study's focus on restaurant workers in a specific geographical area in the USA. The results may not fully capture the diversity and D&I dynamics present in other regions or countries. Cultural and regional differences can greatly influence the effectiveness of D&I initiatives. Organizations in regions with different cultural norms or levels of diversity might experience varying outcomes from D&I training. Future research should explore these variations to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how D&I practices operate across different cultural and regional contexts within the hospitality sector.

To address the identified limitations and enhance the robustness of future research, several alternative methodologies could be considered. Longitudinal studies could track changes over time and establish causal relationships between D&I training and employee outcomes. Mixed-methods approaches, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews or focus groups, could offer deeper insights into the nuanced impacts of D&I initiatives. Experimental designs, such as randomized controlled trials, could isolate the effects of D&I training from other variables. Additionally, employing diverse sampling methods, such as stratified or cluster sampling, could improve the representativeness of study samples and mitigate potential biases associated with online surveys.

For hospitality managers, the study underscores the importance of investing in ongoing D&I awareness programs to improve management trust and work engagement. Effective strategies for implementing D&I initiatives include regular and structured training sessions, inclusive leadership development, and establishing feedback mechanisms to gauge and adjust D&I efforts. Sustaining positive changes in organizational commitment requires continuous engagement with employees, recognizing and rewarding contributions to an inclusive environment, and adapting D&I strategies based on evolving needs. Managers may face challenges such as resistance to

change, resource constraints, and difficulties in measuring the impact of D&I initiatives. Addressing these challenges requires a strategic approach to integrating D&I efforts into organizational practices and maintaining their relevance over time.

In conclusion, this study advances both theoretical and empirical understanding of D&I practices in the hospitality sector. It provides valuable insights into how D&I awareness affects management trust, work engagement, and organizational commitment, and offers practical recommendations for managers. By addressing the limitations of existing literature and proposing future research directions, the study contributes to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of D&I practices, highlighting the need for ongoing exploration into their effectiveness across different contexts and sectors.

CONCLUDING SUMMARY

This study has provided significant insights into the effects of diversity and inclusion awareness (DIA) training on restaurant employees, particularly regarding managerial trust, work engagement, and organizational commitment. The results indicate that employees who received DIA training exhibited enhanced levels of trust in management, higher work engagement, and increased organizational commitment compared to those who did not receive such training. Specifically, the training led to notable improvements in trust and engagement, with moderate to large effect sizes. However, the effect on organizational commitment was minimal, suggesting that while DIA training positively impacts certain areas, its influence on long-term commitment may require additional time or be influenced by other factors.

Several methodological limitations of the study should be acknowledged. The use of an online survey method could have introduced sampling biases, as it might not adequately represent the full spectrum of restaurant workers due to variations in technological access and response patterns. Additionally, self-reported data could be subject to biases, such as social desirability or self-perception errors, which might affect the accuracy of the findings. The study's cross-sectional design also limits the ability to draw causal conclusions, as it provides only a snapshot of the relationship between DIA training and employee outcomes.

To address these limitations and strengthen future research, several approaches could be considered. Longitudinal studies would be beneficial for observing changes over time and establishing causality between DIA training and its effects on employee perceptions. Mixed-methods research, which combines quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews or focus groups, could offer deeper insights into the nuances of DIA training impacts and validate self-reported data. Experimental designs, such as randomized controlled trials, could further isolate the effects of DIA training from other variables. Additionally, employing diverse sampling methods, including stratified or cluster sampling, could improve the representativeness of the study sample and mitigate online survey biases.

The generalizability of the study's findings is limited by its focus on restaurant workers in the USA. The results may not apply directly to other sectors within the hospitality industry, such as hotels or tourism agencies, where job roles and organizational dynamics differ significantly. Moreover, cultural and regional differences can influence the effectiveness of DIA initiatives, making it crucial to explore how DIA training impacts employees in various cultural contexts.

Findings specific to the USA might not be applicable in other countries with different cultural attitudes toward diversity and inclusion.

Future research should expand on these findings by exploring DIA training impacts across different hospitality sectors, including luxury hotels and tourism agencies, to identify sector-specific challenges and opportunities. Cross-cultural studies could provide insights into how DIA training affects employees in various regions, enhancing the understanding of its global applicability. Long-term impact studies could assess how sustained DIA initiatives influence organizational commitment and job satisfaction over extended periods. Comparative studies of different DIA interventions could also shed light on best practices for maximizing the effectiveness of these programs.

For hospitality managers, the study highlights the importance of investing in DIA training to improve managerial trust and work engagement. Managers should focus on consistent and ongoing DIA training, integrating it into all aspects of organizational practices to create an inclusive environment. Regular monitoring and adaptation of DIA programs based on employee feedback can help address emerging issues and enhance the overall impact of these initiatives. By addressing the identified limitations and expanding research into diverse contexts, future studies can build on these findings to further advance the understanding and effectiveness of DIA practices in the hospitality industry.

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