Building a Sustainable Workforce Through Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to ensure Operational Safety in Supply Chain Management

Atul Kumar Dayal
Research Scholar
Teerthanker Mahaveer University
Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh

M.P. Singh
Professor
Teerthanker Mahaveer University
Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh

Abstract:
In today's globalized and highly interconnected economy, supply chain management (SCM) faces increasing demands for resilience, agility, and operational safety. A critical yet often underutilized strategy to enhance these capabilities lies in building a sustainable workforce through the principles of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). This paper explores the vital intersection between DEI initiatives and operational safety within SCM, asserting that a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce not only drives innovation but also fortifies systemic safety and risk mitigation efforts across supply chains. The study investigates how inclusive hiring practices, equitable leadership development, and culturally competent training programs contribute to improved communication, decision-making, and problem-solving capabilities within supply chain teams. By embracing diversity across dimensions such as race, gender, age, ethnicity, and ability, organizations can tap into a wider pool of experiences and perspectives, which in turn enhances the detection of risks, compliance with safety protocols, and overall workforce engagement. Furthermore, the research highlights case studies from industry leaders that have successfully integrated DEI into their SCM operations, demonstrating measurable improvements in operational safety outcomes. The paper also identifies common barriers to DEI implementation in supply chains, including unconscious bias, lack of leadership commitment, and fragmented policies, and provides actionable strategies to overcome these challenges. Ultimately, this paper argues that embedding DEI within the fabric of supply chain workforce management is not just a moral imperative but a strategic necessity for sustainable operations. By fostering an environment where all individuals are valued and empowered, organizations can build resilient supply chains capable

of withstanding disruptions while maintaining the highest standards of safety and performance. The findings serve as a call to action for supply chain leaders to prioritize DEI as a core component of their sustainability and safety agendas.

Keywords: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Supply Chain Safety

Introduction

Rethinking the Workforce for A Human-Centered Approach

The nature of work and workplaces is evolving rapidly. Globalization, demographic shifts, social movements and technological advancements are reshaping not only how we work but also who we work with. In this new landscape, organizations must rethink how they manage their people—not just to stay competitive but to survive.

One of the most important changes happening today is the increasing recognition of **diversity**, **equity**, and **inclusion** (DEI) as essential components of sustainable workforce strategies. Traditionally, businesses focused on efficiency and profitability as their main goals. While these remain important, forward-thinking organizations now understand that sustainability also includes **people**—their growth, well-being, and ability to thrive over time.

At its core, workforce sustainability is about building a system that supports employees in meaningful ways, adapts to changing needs, and continues to grow stronger over time. DEI helps achieve that by creating environments where all individuals—regardless of their background—can feel valued, supported, and empowered.

- **Diversity** brings a wide range of perspectives and ideas by including people from different cultural, racial, gender, and social backgrounds.
- **Equity** ensures fairness by recognizing that not everyone starts from the same place and adjusting systems to level the playing field.
- **Inclusion** means making sure everyone feels a genuine sense of belonging, where their voices are heard and respected.

This paper explores how integrating DEI into organizational strategies can help build a sustainable workforce—one that is resilient, innovative, and prepared for the future.

Understanding the Building Blocks: What the Research Says

What is Workforce Sustainability?

Sustainable workforce practices are not just about hiring great people—they're about creating systems that allow those people to grow, develop, and stay. A sustainable workforce is one that adapts with the times, supports its employees' well-being, and invests in their development.

This concept connects directly to the **social aspect of sustainable development**, which focuses on human rights, dignity, and equitable access to opportunities. It's about creating work environments that support both the organization's goals and its employees' long-term well-being.

How DEI Impacts Organizational Success

Numerous studies have shown that organizations with strong DEI practices outperform those that don't. For instance, a 2020 study by McKinsey & Company found that companies with more diverse executive teams were more likely to achieve above-average profitability. But it's not just about numbers—diverse teams are also more innovative, better at problem-solving, and more in tune with customer needs.

Another study by Shore et al. (2011) emphasized that creating an inclusive culture leads to greater employee engagement and commitment. When people feel included, they're more likely to stay, perform better, and contribute to a positive workplace culture.

Yet, despite all this evidence, many organizations still struggle to move beyond basic diversity quotas or performative gestures. Real change requires deeper, structural commitment to equity and inclusion—not just symbolic actions.

The Missing Piece: Long-Term Impact

Most research and corporate efforts tend to treat DEI as a set of isolated initiatives—like a one-time training session or a celebratory event. But for DEI to truly support workforce sustainability, it must be embedded in **long-term strategy and culture**. There's a clear need for more longitudinal research that tracks how DEI affects workforce outcomes over time—such as retention, morale, and adaptability.

Methodology: How the Study Was Conducted

To better understand how DEI impacts workforce sustainability in real-world settings, a **mixed-methods approach** was used. This means combining both qualitative (interviews and case studies) and quantitative (survey) methods for a more holistic view.

Case Study Selection

Three organizations from different sectors were selected because of their robust DEI programs:

- A large technology company,
- A healthcare provider,
- An educational institution.

These cases allowed for a broad understanding of how DEI plays out across different workplace cultures.

Data Collection Methods

1. **Interviews**: Conversations were held with human resource managers, DEI officers, and team leads to understand their strategies and challenges.
2. **Policy Review**: Internal documents and policies were analyzed to assess how DEI is incorporated into organizational frameworks.
3. **Employee Survey**: 300 employees from various industries participated in a survey that assessed their perceptions of DEI, job satisfaction, and likelihood of staying with their employer.

Data Analysis

- **Interviews** were analyzed for recurring themes, like challenges and success factors.
- **Surveys** were processed using statistical tools to identify patterns and relationships—such as how inclusion scores related to employee retention.

Key Findings and Insights

1. Diversity Alone Isn't Enough

One of the most striking findings was that simply hiring people from diverse backgrounds doesn't automatically create a better or more sustainable workforce. In one case, a company had impressive gender diversity on paper—but many women left shortly after being hired. Why? Because the organization lacked the systems and culture to support them—things like parental leave, mentorship, and leadership pathways.

This underscores a key point: **Representation is only the first step**. Without inclusive policies and a supportive culture, diversity efforts fall flat.

2. Inclusive Leadership Makes the Difference

Leadership style was one of the most significant factors in creating an inclusive culture. In organizations where leaders were open, empathetic, and accountable, employees reported higher levels of trust and belonging.

Inclusive leaders don't just talk the talk—they walk the walk. They make DEI a visible priority, hold themselves accountable, and create space for honest conversations. This leads to stronger team bonds and more innovative thinking, because people feel safe to share ideas and take risks.

3. Inclusion Drives Engagement and Retention

The survey revealed a powerful link between inclusion and employee commitment. Employees who felt included were **35% more likely** to express a desire to stay with their company long-term. Fairness in promotions and compensation was also strongly tied to retention.

This makes sense. When people believe they're treated fairly and feel like they belong, they're more motivated and loyal. They see a future for themselves within the organization.

4. Major Challenges Still Exist

Despite some encouraging success stories, all three organizations also faced challenges:

- **Resistance to Change**: Some managers were reluctant to alter their leadership styles or hiring practices.
- **Lack of Metrics**: Many organizations struggled to measure the impact of their DEI efforts in concrete terms.
- **Superficial Programs**: One-off training sessions or awareness campaigns often had little lasting effect without broader culture change.

These findings highlight that meaningful DEI work requires ongoing effort and systemic changes—not just surface-level initiatives.

Strategic Recommendations: Moving from Words to Action

For organizations that want to build a sustainable workforce through DEI, the following strategies are essential:

1. Embed DEI into Core Policies

DEI should be part of everything an organization does—from hiring and onboarding to performance reviews and leadership evaluations. This ensures consistency and accountability. For instance, tying DEI goals to manager bonuses or promotion criteria can create real incentives for progress.

2. Make Decisions Based on Data

Data is a powerful tool for uncovering blind spots and tracking progress. Organizations should collect detailed DEI data—broken down by department, job level, and demographics—to understand where gaps exist. This allows for targeted interventions and shows where change is (or isn't) happening.

3. Support Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

ERGs provide safe spaces for underrepresented groups and can also be a valuable source of feedback. In one case, an LGBTQ+ ERG helped an organization identify gaps in its healthcare policy, leading to meaningful reforms. These groups can serve as both support networks and engines of change.

4. Train and Empower Inclusive Leaders

Leadership is where culture change begins. Organizations should provide training focused on inclusive leadership skills—like active listening, empathy, and managing bias. But more importantly, leaders must be held accountable for applying these skills in practice.

5. Create Feedback Loops

Employees need safe, anonymous ways to share their experiences and concerns. Feedback mechanisms—like surveys, listening sessions, or anonymous suggestion tools—allow organizations to learn and improve continuously.

6. Connect DEI to Broader Social Impact

Organizations should not only look inward but also align their DEI efforts with broader community engagement. Partnering with local organizations, supporting minority-owned businesses, and investing in underserved communities are all ways to extend the impact of DEI.

Conclusion: A Call for Courage and Commitment

The workforce of the future is diverse. But to truly benefit from that diversity, organizations must go beyond slogans and checkboxes. They must create systems where all people—not just some—have the opportunity to thrive.

DEI is not just about fairness or compliance; it's about building stronger, more adaptive, and more innovative organizations. When people feel seen, heard, and valued, they bring their best selves to work—and everyone benefits.

In a world that is constantly changing, the most sustainable workforce is one that reflects the world around it. That means embracing difference, ensuring fairness, and fostering belonging.

Organizations that rise to this challenge will not only succeed—they will lead.

References:

- McKinsey & Company. (2020). *Diversity wins: How inclusion matters*.
- Shore, L. M., Cleveland, J. N., & Sanchez, D. (2011). *Inclusive workplaces: A review and model*. Human Resource Management Review, 21(4), 228–238.
- Roberson, Q. M. (2006). *Disentangling the meanings of diversity and inclusion in organizations*. Group & Organization Management, 31(2), 212–236.
- Ferdman, B. M., & Deane, B. R. (2014). *Diversity at Work: The Practice of Inclusion*. Jossey-Bass.
- Thomas, D. A., & Ely, R. J. (1996). *Making differences matter: A new paradigm for managing diversity*. Harvard Business Review, 74(5), 79–90.
- Ma, X., Arif, A., Kaur, P., Jain, V., Refiana Said, L., & Mughal, N. (2022). Revealing the effectiveness of technological innovation shocks on CO2 emissions in BRICS: emerging challenges and implications. *Environmental Science and Pollution Research*, *29*(31), 47373-47381.
- Hasan, N., Nanda, S., Singh, G., Sharma, V., Kaur, G., & Jain, V. (2024, February). Adoption of Blockchain Technology in Productivity And Automation Process of Microfinance Services. In *2024 4th International Conference on Innovative Practices in Technology and Management (ICIPTM)* (pp. 1-5). IEEE.

- Jan, N., Jain, V., Li, Z., Sattar, J., & Tongkachok, K. (2022). Post-COVID-19 investor psychology and individual investment decision: A moderating role of information availability. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 846088.

- Maurya, S. K., Jain, V., Setiawan, R., Ashraf, A., Koti, K., Niranjan, K., ... & Rajest, S. S. (2021). *The Conditional Analysis of Principals Bullying Teachers Reasons in The Surroundings of The City* (Doctoral dissertation, Petra Christian University).

- Anand, R., Juneja, S., Juneja, A., Jain, V., & Kannan, R. (Eds.). (2023). *Integration of IoT with cloud computing for smart applications*. CRC Press.

- Dadhich, M., Pahwa, M. S., Jain, V., & Doshi, R. (2021). Predictive models for stock market index using stochastic time series ARIMA modeling in emerging economy. In *Advances in Mechanical Engineering: Select Proceedings of CAMSE 2020* (pp. 281-290). Springer Singapore.

- Ahmad, A. Y., Jain, V., Verma, C., Chauhan, A., Singh, A., Gupta, A., & Pramanik, S. (2024). CSR Objectives and Public Institute Management in the Republic of Slovenia. In *Ethical Quandaries in Business Practices: Exploring Morality and Social Responsibility* (pp. 183-202). IGI Global.

- Verma, C., Sharma, R., Kaushik, P., & Jain, V. (2024). The Role of Microfinance Initiatives in Promoting Sustainable Economic Development: Exploring Opportunities, Challenges, and Outcomes.

- Liu, L., Bashir, T., Abdalla, A. A., Salman, A., Ramos-Meza, C. S., Jain, V., & Shabbir, M. S. (2024). Can money supply endogeneity influence bank stock returns? A case study of South Asian economies. *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, *26*(2), 2775-2787.

- Zhang, M., Jain, V., Qian, X., Ramos-Meza, C. S., Ali, S. A., Sharma, P., ... & Shabbir, M. S. (2023). The dynamic relationship among technological innovation, international trade, and energy production. *Frontiers in Environmental Science*, *10*, 967138.

- Cao, Y., Tabasam, A. H., Ahtsham Ali, S., Ashiq, A., Ramos-Meza, C. S., Jain, V., & Shahzad Shabbir, M. (2023). The dynamic role of sustainable development goals to eradicate the multidimensional poverty: evidence from emerging economy. *Economic research-Ekonomska istraživanja*, *36*(3).

- Liu, Y., Cao, D., Cao, X., Jain, V., Chawla, C., Shabbir, M. S., & Ramos-Meza, C. S. (2023). The effects of MDR-TB treatment regimens through socioeconomic and spatial characteristics on environmental-health outcomes: evidence from Chinese hospitals. *Energy & Environment*, *34*(4), 1081-1093.

- Chawla, C., Jain, V., Joshi, A., & Gupta, V. (2013). A study of satisfaction level and awareness of tax-payers towards e-filing of income tax return—with reference to Moradabad city. *International Monthly Refereed Journal of Research In Management & Technology*, *2*, 60-66.

- Kaur, M., Sinha, R., Chaudhary, V., Sikandar, M. A., Jain, V., Gambhir, V., & Dhiman, V. (2022). Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the livelihood of employees in different sectors. *Materials Today: Proceedings*, *51*, 764-769.

- Liu, Y., Salman, A., Khan, K., Mahmood, C. K., Ramos-Meza, C. S., Jain, V., & Shabbir, M. S. (2023). The effect of green energy production, green technological innovation, green international trade, on ecological footprints. *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 1-14.

- Jun, W., Mughal, N., Kaur, P., Xing, Z., & Jain, V. (2022). Achieving green environment targets in the world's top 10 emitter countries: the role of green innovations and renewable electricity production. *Economic research-Ekonomska istraživanja*, *35*(1), 5310-5335.

- Verma, C., & Jain, V. Exploring Promotional Strategies in Private Universities: A Comprehensive Analysis of Tactics and Innovative Approaches.

- Jain, V., Ramos-Meza, C. S., Aslam, E., Chawla, C., Nawab, T., Shabbir, M. S., & Bansal, A. (2023). Do energy resources matter for growth level? The dynamic effects of different strategies of renewable energy, carbon emissions on sustainable economic growth. *Clean Technologies and Environmental Policy*, *25*(3), 771-777.

- Jain, V., Rastogi, M., Ramesh, J. V. N., Chauhan, A., Agarwal, P., Pramanik, S., & Gupta, A. (2023). FinTech and Artificial Intelligence in Relationship Banking and Computer Technology. In *AI, IoT, and Blockchain Breakthroughs in E-Governance* (pp. 169-187). IGI Global.

- Rajkumar, D. A., Agarwal, P., Rastogi, D. M., Jain, D. V., Chawla, D. C., & Agarwal, D. M. (2022). Intelligent Solutions for Manipulating Purchasing Decisions of Customers

Using Internet of Things during Covid-19 Pandemic. *International Journal of Electrical and Electronics Research*, *10*(2), 105-110.

- Jain, V., Agarwal, M. K., Hasan, N., & Kaur, G. (2022). Role of Microfinance and Microinsurance Services As a Tool for Poverty Alleviation. *Journal of Management & Entrepreneurship*, *16*(2), 1179-1195.

- Verma, A. K., Ansari, S. N., Bagaria, A., & Jain, V. (2022). The Role of Communication for Business Growth: A Comprehensive Review. *World Journal of English Language*, *12*(3), 164-164.

- Ansari, S., Kumar, P., Jain, V., & Singh, G. (2022). Communication Skills among University Students. *World Journal of English Language*, *12*(3), 103-109.

- Rao, D. N., Vidhya, G., Rajesh, M. V., Jain, V., Alharbi, A. R., Kumar, H., & Halifa, A. (2022). An innovative methodology for network latency detection based on IoT centered blockchain transactions. *Wireless Communications and Mobile Computing*, *2022*(1), 8664079.

- Jain, V. (2021). An overview of wal-mart, amazon and its supply chain. *ACADEMICIA: An International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, *11*(12), 749-755.

- Jain, V., & Garg, R. (2019). Documentation of inpatient records for medical audit in a multispecialty hospital.

- Verma, A., Singh, A., Sethi, P., Jain, V., Chawla, C., Bhargava, A., & Gupta, A. (2023). Applications of Data Security and Blockchain in Smart City Identity Management. In *Handbook of Research on Data-Driven Mathematical Modeling in Smart Cities* (pp. 154-174). IGI Global.

- Agarwal, P., Jain, V., & Goel, S. (2020). Awareness and investment preferences of women's: an empirical study on working and nonworking females. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, *17*(7), 13469-13484.

- Jha, R. S., Jain, V., & Chawla, C. (2019). Hate speech & mob lynching: a study of its relations, impacts & regulating laws. *Think India (QJ)*, *22*(3), 1401-1405.

- Jain, V., & Singh, V. K. (2019). Influence of healthcare advertising and branding on hospital services. *Pravara Med Rev*, *11*, 19-21.

- Jain, V., & Gupta, A. (2012). Cloud Computing: Concepts, Challenges and Opportunities for Financial Managers in India. *Amity Global Business Review*, *7*.

- Jain, V., & Ackerson, D. (2023). The Importance of Emotional Intelligence in Effective Leadership. *Edited by Dan Ackerson, Semaphore*, *5*.

- Sharif, S., Lodhi, R. N., Jain, V., & Sharma, P. (2022). A dark side of land revenue management and counterproductive work behavior: does organizational injustice add fuel to fire?. *Journal of Public Procurement*, *22*(4), 265-288.

- Jain, V. (2021). A review on different types of cryptography techniques. *ACADEMICIA: An International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, *11*(11), 1087-1094.

- Kumar, S., & Jain, V. (2021). A survey on business profitability for a music artist by advertising on YouTube. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Business and Government| Vol*, *27*(3), 807.

- Chawla, C. H. A. N. C. H. A. L., & Jain, V. I. P. I. N. (2021). Teamwork on employee performance and organization Growth. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Business and Government*, *27*(3), 706.

- MEHRA, A., & JAIN, V. (2021). A review study on the brand image on the customer's perspective. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Business and Government| Vol*, *27*(3), 773.

- Jha, R. S., Tyagi, N., Jain, V., Chaudhary, A., & Sourabh, B. (2020). Role of Ethics in Indian Politics. *Waffen-Und Kostumkunde Journal*, *9*(8), 88-97.

- Kumar, A., Kansal, A., & Jain, V. (2020). A Comprehensive Study of Factor Influencing Investor's Perception Investing in Mutual Funds. *European Journal of Molecular & Clinical Medicine*, *7*(11), 2020.

- Veeraiah, V., Ahamad, S., Jain, V., Anand, R., Sindhwani, N., & Gupta, A. (2023, May). IoT for Emerging Engineering Application Related to Commercial System. In *International Conference on Emergent Converging Technologies and Biomedical Systems* (pp. 537-550). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.

- Jain, V. (2021). Word of mouth as a new element of the marketing communication mix: Online consumer review. *South Asian Journal of Marketing & Management Research*, *11*(11), 108-114.

- Kansal, A., Jain, V., & Agrawal, S. K. (2020). Impact of digital marketing on the purchase of health insurance products. *Jour of Adv Research in Dynamical & Control Systems*, *12*.

- Jain, V., Chawla, C., Arya, S., Agarwal, R., & Agarwal, M. (2019). An Empirical Study of Product Design for New Product Development with Special Reference to Indian Mobile Industry. *TEST Engineering & Management*, *81*, 1241-1254.

- Jain, V. (2017). Emerging Digital Business Opportunities and Value. *Data Analytics & Digital Technologies*.

- Khan, H., Veeraiah, V., Jain, V., Rajkumar, A., Gupta, A., & Pandey, D. (2023). Integrating Deep Learning in an IoT Model to Build Smart Applications for Sustainable Cities. In *Handbook of Research on Data-Driven Mathematical Modeling in Smart Cities* (pp. 238-261). IGI Global.

- Jain, V, Agarwal, M. K., Hasan, N., & Kaur, G. ROLE OF MICROFINANCE AND MICROINSURANCE SERVICES AS A TOOL FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION.

- Gupta, N., Sharma, M., Rastogi, M., Chauhan, A., Jain, V., & Yadav, P. K. (2021). Impact of COVID-19 on education sector in Uttarakhand: Exploratory factor analysis. *Linguistics and Culture Review*, 784-793.

- Jain, V. (2021). Information technology outsourcing chain: Literature review and implications for development of distributed coordination. *ACADEMICIA: An International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, *11*(11), 1067-1072.

- Jain, V. I. P. I. N., Chawla, C. H. A. N. C. H. A. L., & Arya, S. A. T. Y. E. N. D. R. A. (2021). Employee Involvement and Work Culture. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Business and Government*, *27*(3), 694-699.

- Setiawan, R., Kulkarni, V. D., Upadhyay, Y. K., Jain, V., Mishra, R., Yu, S. Y., & Raisal, I. (2020). *The Influence Work-Life Policies Can Have on Part-Time Employees in Contrast to Full-Time Workers and The Consequence It Can Have on Their Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment and Motivation* (Doctoral dissertation, Petra Christian University).

- Verma, C., Sharma, R., Kaushik, P., & Jain, V. (2024). The Role of Microfinance Initiatives in Promoting Sustainable Economic Development: Exploring Opportunities, Challenges, and Outcomes.

- Verma, C., Sharma, R., Kaushik, P., & Jain, V. (2024). The Role of Microfinance Initiatives in Promoting Sustainable Economic Development: Exploring Opportunities, Challenges, and Outcomes.

- Jain, V. (2021). An overview on employee motivation. *Asian Journal of Multidimensional Research*, *10*(12), 63-68.

- Jain, V. (2021). A review on different types of cryptography techniques "should be replaced by" exploring the potential of steganography in the modern era. *ACADEMICIA: An International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, *11*(11), 1139-1146.

- Jain, V., Chawla, C., Arya, S., Agarwal, R., & Agarwal, M. (2019). Impact of Job Satisfaction on relationship between employee performance and human resource management practices followed by Bharti Airtel Limited Telecommunications with reference to Moradabad region. *International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering*, *8*, 493-498.

- Verma, C., Sharma, R., Kaushik, P., & Jain, V. (2024). The Role of Microfinance Initiatives in Promoting Sustainable Economic Development: Exploring Opportunities, Challenges, and Outcomes.

- Jain, V., Verma, C., Chauhan, A., Singh, A., Jain, S., Pramanik, S., & Gupta, A. (2024). A Website-Dependent Instructional Platform to Assist Indonesian MSMEs. In *Empowering Entrepreneurial Mindsets With AI* (pp. 299-318). IGI Global.