



DEIA: ON PAPER OR IN PRACTICE? A Study on the Impact of Authentic and Inauthentic Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Initiatives in Indian Organizations

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Abstract: This study explores the influence of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) practices on employees, focusing on the distinction between authentic and inauthentic DEIA initiatives. Through a survey of 212 participants, the study evaluates organizational commitment, motivation, and team dynamics in workplaces with varying levels of DEIA authenticity. Results demonstrate that employees in organizations with authentic DEIA practices report significantly higher levels of organizational commitment, motivation, and positive team dynamics compared to those in inauthentic organizations. These findings underscore the importance of genuine DEIA efforts for enhancing employee experience and organizational performance. Future research should focus on the leadership's role in fostering authentic DEIA practices.

Keywords: DEIA, Organizational Commitment, Motivation, Team Dynamics, Authenticity

I INTRODUCTION

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) initiatives have become a focal point in organizational strategies, yet the authenticity of these practices remains underexplored. Authentic DEIA practices—those that genuinely aim to foster inclusivity—contrast sharply with inauthentic, performative efforts, which often serve as mere facades for organizations without real commitment to diversity goals. This research seeks to investigate how authentic versus inauthentic DEIA practices affect employee motivation, organizational commitment, and team dynamics. Specifically, it explores whether employees in authentic DEIA environments are more likely to demonstrate commitment, motivation, and better team collaboration than those in less genuine contexts.

II LITERATURE REVIEW

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) initiatives have garnered significant attention in organizational research. Historically, diversity management has been approached from a compliance perspective, with many organizations adhering to anti-discrimination laws without fundamentally altering workplace dynamics. Early efforts in the 1980s and 1990s

primarily focused on increasing the representation of underrepresented groups, often through tokenistic measures such as quotas and superficial diversity training (Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014). These initiatives, while well-intentioned, often lacked depth and failed to create a truly inclusive work environment. As a result, the impact on employee motivation and organizational culture was limited.

In more recent years, there has been a growing recognition that diversity efforts must go beyond surface-level representation to address the deeper systemic issues that perpetuate inequality. Researchers such as Leslie (2019) have emphasized the need for authentic DEIA practices, which involve genuine commitments to fostering an inclusive environment. Authenticity in DEIA is marked by transparent policies, equitable access to opportunities, and the integration of diverse perspectives at all levels of decision-making. Authentic DEIA practices are more likely to result in positive organizational outcomes, including improved employee engagement, enhanced team performance, and greater innovation.

Several theories underpin the importance of authenticity in DEIA. Surface-level diversity, which includes observable characteristics like race, gender, and age, has been shown to contribute to initial perceptions of diversity. However, it is deep-level diversity—factors such as values, attitudes, and experiences—that have the most significant impact on team dynamics and organizational success (Qin et al., 2014). Studies have demonstrated that organizations with a genuine commitment to DEIA not only improve their public image but also foster a sense of belonging among employees, which is crucial for enhancing job satisfaction and retention (Leslie, 2019).

Furthermore, the concept of psychological safety plays a critical role in the success of DEIA initiatives. Employees who feel safe to express their authentic selves at work, without fear of discrimination or exclusion, are more likely to contribute innovative ideas and collaborate effectively with colleagues (Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014). In contrast, organizations that implement DEIA initiatives merely to satisfy external pressures or improve public relations often fail to create this environment of trust. Consequently, these inauthentic efforts may lead to employee disengagement and cynicism, undermining the very goals that diversity programs aim to achieve.

In summary, the literature suggests that while surface-level diversity can provide immediate visual representation, it is the deeper, more authentic DEIA practices that yield sustainable organizational benefits. This study seeks to build on this body of knowledge by examining the differential effects of authentic versus inauthentic DEIA practices on employee motivation, organizational commitment, and team dynamics.

The purpose of this study is to research the effects of organizations that have authentic DEIA practices compared to those with inauthentic DEIA practices. Specifically, will focus on how organizational commitment, motivation, and team dynamics are impacted.

Hypotheses:

H1: Employees in authentic DEIA organizations have higher organizational commitment than those in inauthentic DEIA organizations.

H2: Employees in authentic DEIA organizations have higher motivation than those in inauthentic DEIA organizations.

H3: Employees in authentic DEIA organizations have more positive team dynamics than those in inauthentic DEIA organizations.

III RESEARCH METHOD

1. Research Design:

This study employed a quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey method to investigate the impact of authentic and inauthentic Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) practices on employee motivation, organizational commitment, and team dynamics. A snowball sampling technique was utilized to gather responses from individuals working in various organizations across India. The survey was designed to assess employees' perceptions of their organization's DEIA initiatives and their influence on key workplace variables.

2. Sample Size and Participants:

The study involved a sample size of 212 participants, drawn from a diverse range of industries, including IT, manufacturing, healthcare, and education sectors. Participants were required to be at least 18 years old and to have worked in an organization with some form of DEIA initiatives in place. The snowball sampling method was chosen due to its ability to reach a wide range of participants through referrals, ensuring a diverse and representative sample. Approximately 47% of participants worked in organizations with authentic DEIA practices, while 53% worked in environments with inauthentic or superficial DEIA efforts.

3. Data Collection Instruments:

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered online through the Qualtrics platform. The questionnaire consisted of 29 items, which were divided into five sections: demographic information, DEIA authenticity (6 items), organizational commitment (7 items), employee motivation (8 items), and team dynamics (8 items). Most items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5). The DEIA authenticity scale was developed specifically for this study, drawing from existing literature on diversity management and organizational authenticity.

4. Procedure:

The survey link was distributed through email and social media, targeting professional networks. Participants were provided with a consent form outlining the purpose of the study, confidentiality assurances, and their right to withdraw at any time. They were encouraged to forward the survey link to colleagues, allowing for further recruitment of participants through snowball sampling. Data were collected over a period of three months, from January to March 2024.

5. Data Analysis:

Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and JASP software. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were calculated for each variable, followed by independent t-tests to compare the differences between authentic and inauthentic DEIA organizations. Additionally, Pearson's correlation was used to assess the relationships between DEIA authenticity, motivation, organizational commitment, and team dynamics. Cronbach's alpha was computed to ensure the reliability of the scales, with all variables exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.7, indicating high internal consistency.

IV RESEARCH RESULTS

The analysis revealed significant differences between organizations with authentic and inauthentic DEIA practices across all measured variables: motivation, organizational commitment, and team dynamics.

1. Motivation:

Employees in organizations with authentic DEIA practices reported significantly higher levels of motivation ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.70$) compared to those in organizations with inauthentic DEIA practices ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.99$). An independent t-test confirmed that this difference was statistically significant ($t(722) = 13.92$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that authentic DEIA efforts positively impact employees' desire to perform their jobs.

2. Organizational Commitment:

The study found that employees in authentic DEIA environments exhibited greater organizational commitment ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.77$) compared to their counterparts in inauthentic DEIA settings ($M = 2.65$, $SD = 0.93$). This difference was statistically significant ($t(722) = 15.62$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that authentic DEIA practices foster a stronger emotional attachment to the organization, making employees more likely to invest in their roles and remain with the company.

3. Team Dynamics:

Team dynamics were also significantly more positive in organizations with authentic DEIA initiatives ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.70$) than in those with inauthentic DEIA practices ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 1.09$). The difference was significant ($t(722) = 19.57$, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating that genuine DEIA efforts contribute to better collaboration, communication, and trust within teams.

4. Correlation Analysis:

Pearson's correlation analysis revealed strong positive correlations between DEIA authenticity and team dynamics ($r = 0.790$), organizational commitment ($r = 0.734$), and motivation ($r =$

0.671), all of which were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). This suggests that as the perceived authenticity of DEIA practices increases, so do motivation, commitment, and the overall functioning of teams.

Reliability Scales

Table 1. Cronbach’s Alpha for DEIA Scale

DEIA

Frequentist Scale Reliability Statistics		Frequentist Individual Item Reliability Statistics	
Estimate	Cronbach's α	Item	If item dropped Cronbach's α
Point estimate	0.869	DEIA1	0.863
95% CI lower bound	0.854	DEIA2	0.871
95% CI upper bound	0.882	DEIA3	0.848
		DEIA4	0.845
		DEIA5	0.862
		DEIA6	0.863
		DEIA7	0.847
		DEIA8	0.845
		DEIA9	0.845

Note. Of the observations, pairwise complete cases were used.

Table 2 . Cronbach’s Alpha for Authenticity Scale

Authenticity

Frequentist Scale Reliability Statistics		Frequentist Individual Item Reliability Statistics	
Estimate	Cronbach's α	Item	If item dropped Cronbach's α
Point estimate	0.884	Auth1	0.868
95% CI lower bound	0.868	Auth2	0.778
95% CI upper bound	0.898	Auth3	0.854

Note. Of the observations, pairwise complete cases were used.

Table 3. Cronbach’s Alpha for Organizational Commitment Scale

Organizational Commitment

Frequentist Scale Reliability Statistics		Frequentist Individual Item Reliability Statistics	
Estimate	Cronbach's α	Item	If item dropped Cronbach's α
Point estimate	0.845	OrgCom1	0.847
95% CI lower bound	0.825	OrgCom2	0.739
95% CI upper bound	0.864	OrgCom3	0.753

Table 4. Cronbach’s Alpha for Motivation Scale

Motivation

Frequentist Scale Reliability Statistics		Frequentist Individual Item Reliability Statistics	
Estimate	Cronbach's α	Item	If item dropped Cronbach's α
Point estimate	0.845	Motiv1	0.801
95% CI lower bound	0.826	Motiv2	0.817
95% CI upper bound	0.863	Motiv3	0.782
		Motiv4	0.813

Table 5 . Cronbach’s Alpha for Team Dynamics Scale

Team Dynamics

Frequentist Scale Reliability Statistics		Frequentist Individual Item Reliability Statistics	
Estimate	Cronbach's α	Item	If item dropped Cronbach's α
Point estimate	0.886	TeamDyn1	0.861
95% CI lower bound	0.872	TeamDyn2	0.859
95% CI upper bound	0.899	TeamDyn3	0.842
		TeamDyn4	0.851

Note. Of the observations, pairwise complete cases were used.

T-Tests

Table 6. Independent Samples T-Test Results for DEIA, Motivation, Team Dynamics, Organisational commitment and Retention

Independent Samples T-Test					
	t	df	p	Cohen's d	SE Cohen's d
DEIA	26.703	722	< .001 ^a	2.397	0.115
Motivation	13.922	722	< .001 ^a	1.250	0.097
Team Dynamics	19.568	722	< .001 ^a	1.757	0.104
Org Commitment	15.620	722	< .001 ^a	1.402	0.099
Retention	7.843	721	< .001 ^a	0.704	0.092

Note. Student's t-test.

^a Levene's test is significant ($p < .05$), suggesting a violation of the equal variance assumption

Table 7. Test of Equality of Variance (Levene’s Test) for DEIA, Motivation, Organizational Commitment, Team Dynamics and Retention

Test of Equality of Variances (Levene's)

	F	df ₁	df ₂	p
DEIA	100.259	1	722	< .001
Motivation	35.770	1	722	< .001
Team Dynamics	71.721	1	722	< .001
Org Commitment	12.949	1	722	< .001
Retention	17.764	1	721	< .001

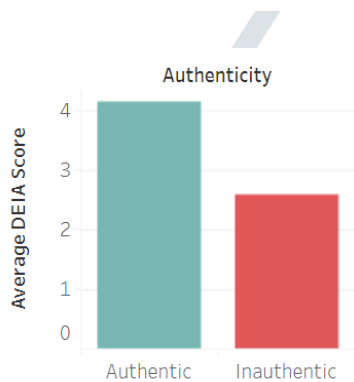


Fig 1. Average DEIA Scores by Demographic Group Scores in Authentic vs. Inauthentic DEIA Organizations

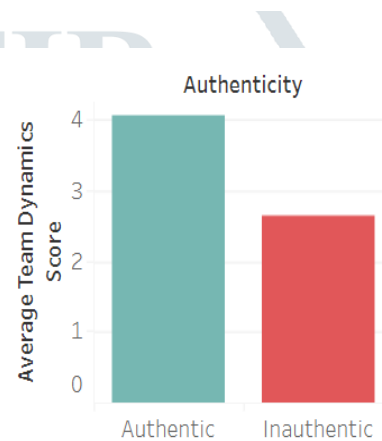


Fig 4 : Team Dynamics Scores Comparing Authentic and Inauthentic DEIA Environments

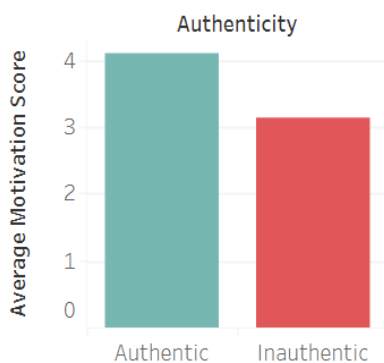


Fig 2. Average Motivation Scores in Authentic vs. Inauthentic DEIA Organizations

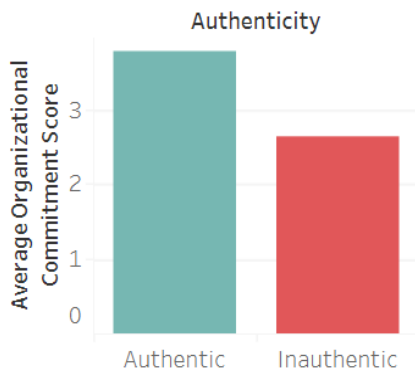


Fig 3: Organizational Commitment Levels in Authentic vs. Inauthentic DEIA Practices

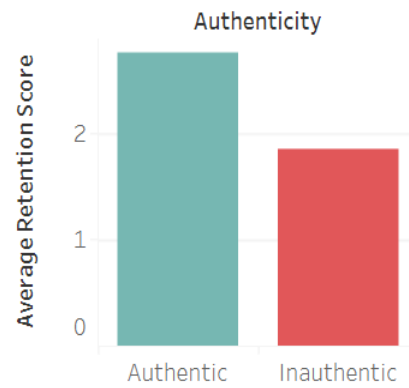


Fig 5: Average Retention Scores in Authentic vs. Inauthentic DEIA Organizations

Correlations

Table 8. Pearson’s Correlation Between DEIA, Authenticity, Organizational Commitment, Motivation, a Team Dynamics and Retention

Variable		DEIA	Authenticity	Motivation	Team Dynamics	Org Commitment	Retention
1. DEIA	Pearson's r	—					
	p-value	—					
2. Authenticity	Pearson's r	0.697	—				
	p-value	< .001	—				
3. Motivation	Pearson's r	0.671	0.408	—			
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—			
4. Team Dynamics	Pearson's r	0.790	0.516	0.681	—		
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	—		
5. Org Commitment	Pearson's r	0.734	0.459	0.787	0.713	—	
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	—	
6. Retention	Pearson's r	0.412	0.259	0.500	0.422	0.748	—
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	—

Average DEIA Scores by Demographic:

DEIA by Age

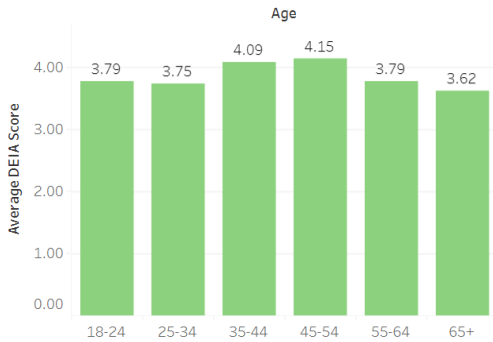


Fig 6. Average DEIA Scores by Age

DEIA by Gender

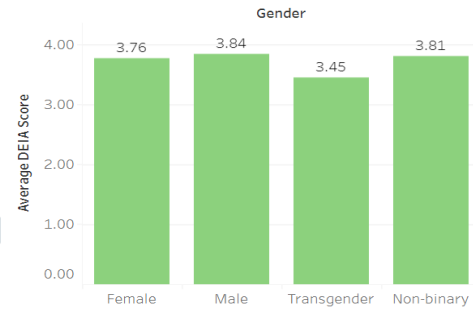


Fig 7. Average DEIA Scores by Gender

DEIA by Work Experience

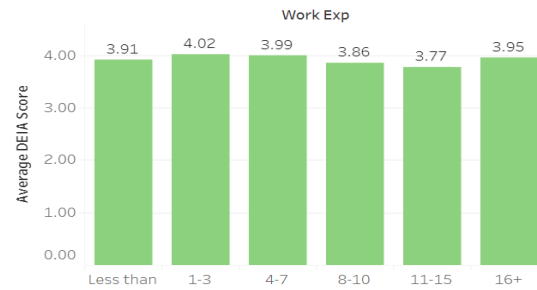


Fig 8 . Average DEIA Scores by Tenure

DEIA by Organizational Level

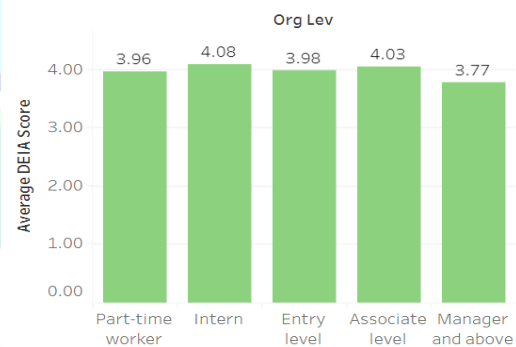


Fig 9 . Average DEIA Scores by Organizational level

V DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide strong evidence that authentic DEIA practices significantly enhance employee motivation, organizational commitment, and team dynamics. These findings are consistent with existing literature that highlights the importance of genuine diversity efforts in creating an inclusive and supportive work environment (Leslie, 2019; Qin et al., 2014).

1. Impact on Motivation:

Authentic DEIA practices appear to foster intrinsic motivation among employees, as they perceive that their organization truly values diversity and inclusivity. This sense of belonging and acceptance drives employees to engage more fully in their work. In contrast, inauthentic DEIA initiatives, which often serve as mere symbolic gestures, fail to inspire the same level of motivation. Employees in these environments may feel that diversity efforts are performative, leading to disengagement and decreased effort.

2. Organizational Commitment:

The higher levels of organizational commitment reported by employees in authentic DEIA environments suggest that these practices strengthen emotional bonds between employees and their organizations. When diversity initiatives are authentic, employees feel valued and respected, which enhances their loyalty to the company. On the other hand, inauthentic DEIA efforts may undermine trust, leading to reduced commitment and higher turnover intentions.

3. Team Dynamics:

The positive relationship between authentic DEIA practices and team dynamics underscores the importance of inclusivity in fostering collaborative work environments. When employees believe that their diverse perspectives are genuinely valued, they are more likely to contribute openly in team settings. This leads to more innovative problem-solving and better overall team performance. Conversely, inauthentic DEIA efforts may create divisions within teams, as employees perceive that the organization's commitment to diversity is superficial and self-serving.

4. Implications for Practice:

These findings have important implications for organizational leaders. To realize the full benefits of diversity, organizations must move beyond tokenistic DEIA efforts and invest in authentic initiatives that create real change. Leaders play a critical role in modeling inclusive behaviors, promoting transparency, and ensuring that diversity initiatives align with the organization's values and practices. Authentic DEIA efforts not only improve employee outcomes but also enhance overall organizational performance, making it a worthwhile investment for any company.

The findings also suggest that motivation is significantly higher in organizations with authentic DEIA practices. Employees who perceive their organization as genuinely committed to diversity are more likely to feel motivated to contribute their best efforts. This is likely because authentic DEIA initiatives signal to employees that the organization cares about their well-being and personal growth, which in turn fosters intrinsic motivation. In contrast, employees in

organizations with inauthentic DEIA practices may feel undervalued and unmotivated, as they perceive the organization's efforts to be more about image than substance.

In conclusion, the discussion highlights the critical role of authenticity in DEIA practices. Organizations that invest in genuine, meaningful diversity initiatives are likely to see substantial benefits in terms of employee motivation, commitment, and team performance. On the other hand, organizations that fail to authentically engage with DEIA may experience negative consequences, including higher turnover, lower engagement, and diminished organizational performance. These findings underscore the need for organizations to move beyond tokenism and make DEIA an integral part of their culture and operations.

VI CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research demonstrates the critical role of authentic DEIA initiatives in promoting positive workplace outcomes. Organizations that prioritize genuine efforts in diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility see improved employee motivation, commitment, and team dynamics. These findings emphasize the need for organizations to adopt deeper, more meaningful diversity practices rather than relying on superficial measures. Future research should explore long-term impacts of authentic DEIA practices across different industries and organizational sizes.

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