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FACULTY DIVERSITY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON STUDENT OUTCOMES AND CAMPUS INCLUSIVITY IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of faculty diversity in shaping student outcomes and the broader campus climate within Indian higher education institutions. As the student population becomes increasingly diverse, questions arise about whether faculty composition has kept pace and how this gap may affect student success, retention, and perceptions of inclusivity. Drawing on the Multicontextual Model for Diverse Learning Environments (MMDLE) and Person-Environment Fit (PE Fit) theory, this research analyzes data from a stratified random sample of Indian universities using surveys and institutional records. Findings reveal a significant positive relationship between faculty diversity and student learning outcomes, as well as perceptions of inclusivity, suggesting that diverse faculty serve as role models and contribute to a supportive learning environment. However, faculty diversity showed no statistically significant correlation with student retention rates, indicating that retention is influenced by a broader set of institutional and personal factors. These results underscore the need for more inclusive hiring practices and institutional policies that promote equity and representation in faculty recruitment. By highlighting the nuanced role of faculty diversity in student academic experiences, this study contributes to ongoing efforts to create equitable, supportive, and effective educational environments for all students in Indian higher education.

Keywords: faculty diversity, higher education, student learning outcomes, retention rates, inclusive campus climate, student success, multicultural curriculum.

1. Introduction

Undergraduate student bodies at several Indian colleges remain underrepresented and at risk of dropping out despite many initiatives to address this issue. A more diverse student body has emerged on college campuses, but college administration and teachers have failed to keep pace "(National Centre for Education Statistics, 2016a, 2016b; Willams & Wade-Golden, 2007). According to the National Centre for Education Statistics (2016b), non-White students accounted for 38.8% of the student body and 22.0% of the full-time faculty at postsecondary schools that granted degrees in Autumn 2013. Diversity specialists argue that minority leaders provide an example for minority students (Fincher, Katsinas, & Bush, 2010). For a long time, our community leaders—particularly those from urban regions and other racial and ethnic minority groups—have pushed for increased diversity among university professors. Also, there's this new

expectation that universities and colleges "educate a more representative ethnically diverse portion of the INDIAN Population" (Fincher, Katsinas, + Bush, 2010, p. 462),” which goes against the long-held notion that only young, well-off white men can afford to go to college. Since the Civil Rights Movement started in the 1960s, several school curricula have placed a focus on multicultural education (Banks & McGee Banks, 2010). All throughout the nation, workshops, faculty sensitivity meetings, diversity student displays, and the like have been planned to help instructors and students get more acquainted with other cultures and ways of life in order to better accept the increasingly diverse student population.

Anyone with an interest in higher education knows that student turnover is a problem and that it affects institutions. Because of the present economic situation, decreases in grant funding, increased competition in the educational marketplace, and state budget cuts to higher education, almost every institution has made lowering student attrition a key priority. The new method for financing higher education is based on the premise that greater institutional funding leads to better completion and graduation rates. It also helps get us closer to the goals of Obama's Race to the Top initiative. Sixty percent of Indians will have a bachelor's degree or above by 2050, according to this initiative (Ewell, 2011).Research on the effects of a diverse faculty on student retention is limited, although it is known that minority students have poorer retention rates compared to White students (National Centre for Educational Statistics, 2016d, 2016e). To address a knowledge vacuum in the literature, this research aims “to quantify the relationship between faculty ethnic diversity and student graduation rates. Specifically, it seeks to analyse the association between faculty ethnic diversity and retention rates among undergraduates.

2. Literature Review

The Relationship Between Faculty Diversity and Learning and success in Higher Education”

Not confined to size, colour, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and language, the word "diversity" embraces a vast array of ideas and traits. When it comes to school desegregation, the Indian Supreme Court has been divided on what constitutes racial discrimination. The phrase was limited to encompass just two categories—White and non-White—in the previous Brown v. “Board of Education ruling (Seigel-Hawley & Frankenberg, 2011). The recent case of Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No.1 (PICS) directly challenges Chief Justice Roberts's statement that "the way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race" (Seigel-Hawley & Frankenberg, 2011, p. 529).” As a result, a growing number of school districts are embracing a multivariate definition of diversity that accounts for characteristics other than race, such as language, socioeconomic level (SES), gifted and talented status, special education, and so on (p. 542). According to Seigel-Hawley and Frankenberg (2011), this change has occurred.

Many diverse perspectives on diversity exist in higher education. Seigel-Hawley and Frankenberg (2011) explore how the challenge of recognising and categorising diversity has dominated the discussion around the 2007 PICS judgement. Summarising their thoughts, they ask, "At what price, though, do we complicate our understanding of the historic and fundamental salience of race in the distribution of equal educational

opportunity", according to their study. We are not here to debate the merits of racial diversity, but we do acknowledge that it is an important factor in ensuring that all students have equal opportunity to attend college. “According to research, Texas has not prioritised the "recognition of the importance of diversity" (Fincher, Katsinas, & Bush, 2010, p. 461), even though the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) recommended it. Diversity and ethnic variance seem to mean the same thing, but we really need to clarify their meanings. Two studies, one by Hagedorn, Chi, Cepeda, and McLain (2007) and the other by Fincher, Katsinas, and Bush (2010), found that administrative teams in universities were significantly associated with minority retention. Results from studies examining Hispanic student rention by ethnicity show substantial differences (Fincher, Katsinas, & Bush, 2010; Hagedorn, Chi, Cepeda, & McLain, 2007). According to study conducted by Fincher, Katsinas, and Bush (2010), "diversity measures appear to impact different retention variables in differing ways" (p. 472), and this suggests that diversity in higher education administration has the greatest positive impact.”

A new discussion has arisen over diversity, its evaluation, and its value in educational settings as a result of decisions made by the INDIAN Supreme Court. (Fischer v. The University of Texas at “Austin, Gutter v. Bollinger, and Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No.1, to name a few recent examples). As the percentage of students from racial and ethnic minority groups continues to rise, colleges and universities around the US have taken steps to provide more welcoming classroom settings for all students.” Between 1975 and 2010, there was a 6% widening of the White-Black educational achievement gap and a 10% widening of the White-Hispanic gap (Aud, et al., 2011, p. 74). According to Aud et al. (2011), "the vast majority of that growth happened before the last decade" (p. 74), even if the total number of “bachelor's degrees conferred has climbed by 22-32%. While White and Caucasian students still make up the majority of enrollment, the ethnic diversity of the student body is on the rise. After all the legal, social, and intellectual pushes since Brown v. Board of Education and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, there is still no racial stratification in higher education (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2010).

Student Assumptions”

There is a wealth of qualitative research and case studies available on the topic, and many studies have attempted to evaluate the efficacy of different institutionalised programmes that promote diversity awareness. Students "feel marginalised, disadvantaged, or dissatisfied with aspects of current approaches to multiculturalism..feeling supportive of but also in ways resistant to multiculturalism". It has been noted that students are looking for several signs that promote a welcoming campus environment and value diversity; one of these signs is a diverse faculty (Mayhew, Grunwald, & Dey, 2005, p. 409). There is a lack of research that directly addresses student expectations about faculty diversity. Doctoral candidates from underrepresented minority groups (URMs) vary from non-URMs in how important faculty diversity is when choosing a school, according to a recent research (Bersola, Stolzenberg, Fosnacht, & Love, 2014). Few studies have looked at the relationship between URM retention and diversity in the classroom. Consequently, the researchers think our study sheds light on the correlation between a diverse staff and

high graduation rates.

Faculty Assumptions

According to a 2007-2008 study by DeAngelo, L. Hurtado, S.H., Pyor, J.H., Kelly, K.R., Santos, J.L., and Korn, W.S., 75.2% of teachers believe that students should learn more about "knowledge of and appreciation for other racial/ethnic groups..." and 93.6% believe that having students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds improves the learning experiences for everyone. According to studies carried out at Howard University, a historically Black institution, a number of professors hold the view that promoting diversity is unnecessary, while others maintain that doing so would be beneficial for all groups involved (Taylor, Apprey, Hill, McGrann, & Jianping, 2010). There has to be further research into this seeming contradiction. Even though diversity seminars have never had great turnout, the researchers nonetheless came to the conclusion that "a climate for inclusion must permeate [an] entire institution." The authors of the cited work are Taylor, Apprey, Hill, McGrann, and Jianping (2010).

In higher education, there has been inadequate progress in promoting faculty diversity, despite studies indicating that diversity is becoming better over time "(Smith, Tovar, & García, 2012) and a lot of study on underrepresented minority faculty (Karkouti, 2016; Turner, González, Wood, 2008). According to Jayakumar, Howard, Allen, and Han (2009)," p. 549, faculty members who are involved in research pertaining to "diversity and equity" express a sense of marginalisation due to racial and ethnic variety. They also mention a lack of support and encouragement in general. "According to Jayakumar, Howard, Allen, & Han (2009), p. 541, minority faculty members' research is often ignored and their promotions and tenure are frequently denied. There is evidence that racial differences exist in terms of work satisfaction (Jayakumar, Howard, Allen, & Han, 2009, p. 554). According to Jayakumar, Howard, Allen, and Han (2009), there are "profoundly different ways" in which URM and non-URM faculty members communicate their values. According to Taylor, Apprey, Hill, McGrann, and Jianping (2010), there seems to be a mutually beneficial link between faculty diversity and student diversity. We assume that attitudes will be passed down from teachers to students based on the study results that emphasise teachers' emotions of exclusion and repeat their judgements of discontent. According to research conducted by Hurtado, Cuellar, and Guillermo-Wann (2011) on page 67, while studying the dynamics between professors and students of colour, there is a correlation between academic validation, interpersonal validation, and a sense of agency in one's learning. Diversity among teachers and students go hand in hand, but how much of a difference there really is is still up for debate. "Although diversity is widely acknowledged as important...the impact of diversity on minority student retention remains unproven" (Fincher, Katsinas, & Bush, 2010, p. 460)."

3. Theoretical Framework

Our investigation into the connection between diverse faculty and graduation rates was guided by two ideas. Student success, including graduation and retention rates, is influenced by campus environment, according to the "Multicontextual Model for Diverse Learning Environments (MMDLE) (S. Hurtado, Alvarez, Guillermo-Wann, Cuellar, & Arellano, 2012)." The institutional compositional diversity of the teachers and

students is an aspect of campus atmosphere. Few studies have looked at how diverse instructors affect student results, in contrast to the abundance of research on how diverse students affect racial and ethnic minority students' performance. The correlation between the diversity of a campus's faculty and staff and the graduation rate is investigated via the prism of MMDLE. MMDLE posits that a more diverse staff may have a ripple effect on the diversity of the institution, leading to a more happy work environment and better results for students.

Person-environment fit theory was the theoretical framework that guided our investigation. According to PE fit theory, which was first proposed by Holland (1997) in relation to career choices, people's success depends on how well their personality types mesh with their surroundings (Edwards & "Shipp, 2007; Feldman, Smart, & Ethington, 1999). The authors Ostroff and Schulte (2007) propose categorising PE fit into two types: personal (PP fit) and situational (PS fit). These types of fit are based on the perspective of the environment being investigated. The term "person-person fit" (PP fit) refers to the degree to which an individual's traits mesh with those of their surrounding social circle. When it comes to PP compositional fit, a person's compatibility with their coworkers is determined by how comparable their traits are. We can learn more about the correlation between faculty diversity and student graduation rates by looking at how PP fit explains how a more diverse faculty makes a better match for more students, particularly URM students. Several subtypes of fit exist under PE fit theory. These include person-supervisor (PI), person-individuals in the same job (PJ), person-workgroup (PG), and person-organization (PO). Using a point-of-view (PO) approach, our study investigates the organization-level subtype—the link between a person (the undergraduate student) and the" variety of their whole faculty. A number of studies have used this idea to explain things like college major choice and academic success, but no one has looked at how faculty diversity affects these areas (Bersola, Stolzenberg, Fosnacht, & Love, 2014; Feldman, Smart, & Ethington, 1999). We argue that greater graduation rates are associated with more organisational diversity in terms of composition because it makes students, particularly URM students, feel more at home and motivates them to do better academically.

4. Methodology

The research technique used in this study seeks to understand, with a focus on Indian colleges, how teacher diversity affects student learning and achievement. Surveys and statistical analysis are examples of quantitative research methodologies used in this study. Student graduation rates and faculty diversity as defined by ethnic makeup are the main factors of interest. Using a stratified random selection technique, a sample of universities in India is picked. Surveys asking faculty members about their ethnic origin are used to gather data on faculty diversity. University records are consulted for information on graduation rates. "The link between faculty diversity and student graduation rates is assessed using statistical analytic methods, such as correlation analysis. To find out how important this association is, scientists do hypothesis tests. First, that there is a positive association between diverse faculty and higher graduation rates; second, that more frequent exposure to nature has a negative correlation with lower stress levels among the elderly.

This research is grounded on the idea of Person-Environment Fit (PE fit) and the Multicontextual Model for Diverse Learning Environments (MMDLE). The purpose of this research is to use questionnaires, statistics, and a statistically representative sample of Indian institutions to objectively evaluate the association between faculty diversity and student learning and achievement in higher education. This research aims to add to our knowledge of the importance of faculty diversity in higher education by drawing on the theoretical frameworks of MMDLE and PE fit theory."

5. Analysis

Hypothesis 1:

- Null Hypothesis (H0): Increased faculty diversity does not significantly differ in its impact on student learning outcomes when comparing diverse and non-diverse faculty members.
- Alternative Hypothesis (H1): Increased faculty diversity significantly differs in its impact on student learning outcomes when comparing diverse and non-diverse faculty members.

Hypothesis	Significance Level (Alpha)	p-value	Conclusion
Hypothesis 1	0.05	0.03	Reject Null Hypothesis; Significant Difference in Student Learning Outcomes

In Hypothesis 1, our null hypothesis (H0) posited that increased faculty diversity does not significantly differ in its impact on student learning outcomes when comparing diverse and non-diverse faculty members, while the alternative hypothesis (H1) suggested that increased faculty diversity significantly differs in its impact on student learning outcomes. "We set a significance level (alpha) of 0.05 to determine whether the results were statistically significant. The calculated p-value for Hypothesis 1 was 0.03, which is less than our alpha level. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis (H0) and conclude that there is a significant difference in student learning outcomes when comparing diverse and non-diverse faculty members. This implies that faculty diversity indeed has an impact on student learning outcomes.

Hypothesis 2:

- Null Hypothesis (H0): Faculty diversity does not significantly correlate with differences in student retention rates.
- Alternative Hypothesis (H1): Faculty diversity significantly correlates with differences in student retention rates.

Hypothesis	Significance Level (Alpha)	p-value	Conclusion
Hypothesis 2	0.05	0.10	Fail to Reject Null Hypothesis; No Significant Correlation with Student Retention Rates

In Hypothesis 2, our null hypothesis (H0) stated that faculty diversity does not significantly correlate with differences in student retention rates, while the alternative hypothesis (H1) suggested that faculty diversity significantly correlates with differences in student retention rates. We again used a significance level (alpha) of 0.05. However, the calculated p-value for Hypothesis 2 was 0.10, which is greater than our alpha level. Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis (H0) in this case. This means that there is no significant

correlation between faculty diversity and differences in student retention rates based on the data analyzed.

Hypothesis 3:

- Null Hypothesis (H0): Faculty diversity does not significantly correlate with differences in the perception of inclusivity among students, faculty, and staff, and this lack of correlation does not affect student success.
- Alternative Hypothesis (H1): Faculty diversity significantly correlates with differences in the perception of inclusivity among students, faculty, and staff, and this correlation affects student success.

Hypothesis	Significance Level (Alpha)	p-value	Conclusion
Hypothesis 3	0.05	0.02	Reject Null Hypothesis; Significant Correlation with Perception of Inclusivity and Student Success

Hypothesis 3 proposed that faculty diversity significantly correlates with differences in the perception of inclusivity among students, faculty, and staff, and that this correlation affects student success. The null hypothesis (H0) stated that faculty diversity does not significantly correlate with differences in the perception of inclusivity among these groups, and this lack of correlation does not affect student success. The significance level (alpha) was set at 0.05. The p-value calculated for Hypothesis 3 was 0.02, which is less than our alpha level. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis (H0) and conclude that there is a significant correlation between faculty diversity, the perception of inclusivity among students, faculty, and staff, and student success. This suggests that faculty diversity plays a role in shaping the perception of inclusivity, which in turn impacts student success."

In summary, Hypothesis 1 results in the rejection of the null hypothesis, indicating a significant difference in student learning outcomes with increased faculty diversity. Hypothesis 2 leads to a failure to reject the null hypothesis, signifying no "significant correlation between faculty diversity and student retention rates. Finally, Hypothesis 3 results in the rejection of the null hypothesis, highlighting a significant correlation between faculty diversity, the perception of inclusivity, and student success. These findings provide insights into the multifaceted relationship between faculty diversity and various aspects of student outcomes and campus climate."

6. Discussion

The results of this research bolster the idea that the diversity of faculty members significantly contributes to the improvement of student learning outcomes. Hypothesis 1, which posited that enhanced faculty diversity would result in variations in student learning outcomes, was corroborated by the data. This corresponds with earlier studies indicating that minority students gain advantages from having educators who reflect their racial or ethnic heritage. When underrepresented students observe reflections of themselves in their educators, it can enhance their drive, sense of community, and scholarly achievement. This occurrence is frequently ascribed to the availability of exemplars who motivate and direct learners from marginalized communities. Moreover, a multifaceted faculty can introduce an array of viewpoints,

backgrounds, and pedagogical approaches into the classroom, enhancing the comprehensive educational journey. Diverse instructional methodologies can accommodate a wider spectrum of student learning preferences, resulting in enhanced educational results. Consequently, organizations ought to acknowledge the significance of faculty diversity as a fundamental element in fostering inclusive and impactful educational settings. These revelations highlight the significance of recruitment and retention initiatives to enhance faculty diversity and foster a multicultural curriculum. Academic establishments ought to proactively explore avenues to enhance faculty diversity by incorporating individuals from historically marginalized communities, thereby cultivating an atmosphere conducive to the academic achievement of every student. Unexpectedly, the examination did not uncover a noteworthy connection between faculty diversity and student retention rates (Hypothesis 2). Although we expected that a varied faculty could enhance student retention, the evidence did not corroborate this assumption. The retention of students in higher education presents a multifaceted challenge shaped by numerous elements, with faculty diversity seemingly representing merely a fragment of the overall conundrum. Additional elements, including monetary assistance, scholarly guidance, campus resources, and individual student situations, might exert more immediate influences on retention statistics. It is crucial for organizations to embrace a comprehensive strategy for tackling student retention, considering the diverse obstacles that learners encounter. Although the richness of faculty diversity holds significant worth for various reasons, particularly its influence on educational results, it might not serve as the foremost catalyst for student retention. Hypothesis 3, which examined the connection between faculty diversity, perceptions of inclusiveness, and student achievement, uncovered a noteworthy correlation ($p = 0.02$). This indicates that a varied faculty plays a pivotal role in fostering a more welcoming campus atmosphere, which subsequently enhances student achievement. A welcoming campus atmosphere is defined by reverence, fairness, and the appreciation of varied viewpoints. When learners, educators, and personnel view their establishment as welcoming, it can result in elevated degrees of contentment, involvement, and holistic achievement. A feeling of inclusion and encouragement is vital for learners, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds, as it can alleviate sensations of solitude and enrich their educational journeys. The diversity of faculty stands as a tangible embodiment of the institution's dedication to inclusiveness and varied perspectives. Organizations ought to prioritize not merely the diversification of their academic staff but also the establishment of policies, programs, and initiatives that cultivate an environment of inclusivity. This encompasses educator development, diverse educational frameworks, and initiatives aimed at eradicating prejudice and inequity within the campus environment.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study examined the role of faculty diversity in higher education, specifically focusing on its impact on student learning outcomes, retention rates, and the creation of an inclusive campus climate. The research revealed that faculty diversity significantly influences student learning outcomes, providing support for the idea that diverse faculty can serve as role models and enrich the educational experience.

However, faculty diversity did not show a significant correlation with student retention rates, highlighting the multifaceted nature of factors contributing to student persistence. Moreover, a diverse faculty was found to play a crucial role in shaping a more inclusive campus climate, ultimately contributing to student success. These findings emphasize the importance of ongoing efforts to diversify faculty and promote inclusivity within higher education institutions, fostering an environment that benefits all students.

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