

Towards well-being: role of diversity and nature of work

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Abstract

Purpose – Literature highlights diversity to facilitate cognitive outcomes; nevertheless, there is limited scholarly attention on affective diversity effects. The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of perceived diversity on employee well-being (EWB) and contend different types of diversity to yield differential impact. Further, the authors explore how nature of employee work can moderate these relationships.

Design/methodology/approach – With 311 full-time employees representing large manufacturing organizations in India, the authors test the hypothesized relationships using PROCESS macro.

Findings – Results indicate perception of surface and knowledge diversity having a significant positive impact on EWB. Further, the authors found nature of employee work to moderate the link between knowledge diversity and well-being such that perception of knowledge diversity under complex tasks enhanced well-being; no impact of work complexity was observed on the link between surface diversity and well-being.

Research limitations/implications – Perceived diversity is malleable lending itself to longitudinal work in this field. Besides nature of work, future research may explore other key contextual factors in diversity dynamics.

Practical implications – Contrary to the longstanding theories such as social categorization/similarity attraction, the authors found surface diversity to positively influence EWB. This indicates firms' effective diversity management strategies in creating inclusive workplace. Further, the authors draw implications around team design and workforce composition.

Originality/value – While the scholarly attention to perceived diversity is gradually growing, in a first, the authors empirically examine the impact of diversity perceptions on employee affect in the context of Indian manufacturing firms.

Keywords Employee well-being, Knowledge diversity, Nature of work, Perceived diversity

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Workforce diversity is burgeoning across the world characterized by a mix of gender, ethnicity, lifestyle and functional background. In the twenty-first century, diversity often denotes equality of opportunity and employment without any discrimination on these traits. While it is in vogue to comprise a diverse mix of employees, organizations have not been able to succeed on all accounts in managing diversity (Guillaume *et al.*, 2013; Kundu and Mor, 2016). There are several challenges in upholding diversity even after strenuous efforts of diversity champions. These challenges often relate to societal mind-sets and individual psychological discomforts while working with people possessing diverse attributes.

A great deal of research has focused on workforce diversity particularly, on how diversity impacts group and organizational level functioning; however, individual level outcomes need more scholarly attention (Kundu and Mor, 2016). While scholars demonstrate how diversity can be a source of competitive advantage, they also highlight undesirable social processes such as increased employee turnover, conflict, lowered cohesion and integration (Dwertmann *et al.*, 2016; Guillaume *et al.*, 2013; Jehn and Bezrukova, 2004). Affective diversity effects are often considered as processes to explain diversity's cognitive outcomes and have received limited scholarly attention as key outcome variables (Jackson *et al.*, 2003; Van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007). Additionally, extant diversity literature needs integration with recent paradigms of how perception of individual dissimilarities contributes to employee affect such as feelings of low acceptance, disrespect and exclusion (Findler *et al.*, 2007; Shemla *et al.*, 2016). Further, since empirical evidence of diversity outcomes has largely been mixed and



inconsistent, several researchers argue for examining the role of moderating effects of context and situational factors in understanding the complex diversity phenomenon (Guillaume *et al.*, 2014; Joshi and Roh, 2009; Roberson *et al.*, 2017).

The context of Indian organizations is of particular relevance for this study. Indian demography and societal context differs significantly from that of Western countries (Cooke and Saini, 2010; Kundu and Mor, 2017). Diversity in India is unique since the plethora of cultural patterns contributes new dimensions to the widely studied dissimilarity attributes. India is a federal union comprising 35 states and union territories where 23 officially recognized languages are spoken (Census of India, 2011). Most state boundaries have been organized based on linguistics, and cultural differences are ubiquitous across states. Furthermore, while Hinduism is the dominant religion of the vast population, all other major religions of the world are also well represented (Census of India, 2011). Though this multicultural set-up readily lends itself to explore how diversity will impact affect-related outcomes, scholarly work in an Indian organizational context is presently in its nascent stage (Das, 2014; Kulkarni, 2015). Since scholars have increasingly questioned the universal applicability of Western diversity management theories and practices (Nishii and Özbilgin, 2007), the present study contributes to the growing indigenous diversity scholarship.

The paper is structured as follows. Briefly reviewing the extant literature around diversity's affect-related outcomes, we develop our hypotheses. We contribute to diversity literature by measuring diversity through employee perceptions rather than deriving diversity indices. Taking a pragmatic stand, we submit to perceived diversity as the key direct measure of diversity effects (Harrison *et al.*, 2002; Kundu and Mor, 2017; Shemla *et al.*, 2016; Zellmer-Bruhn *et al.*, 2008). Specifically, we explore how perceptions of dissimilarity will impact employee well-being (EWB). We accord with the past work which suggests different kinds of diversity to produce differential effects (Dyaram and Kamalanabhan, 2011; Mohammed and Angell, 2004). We expect perceptions of surface and knowledge diversity to have a negative and positive impact on EWB, respectively. Further, we highlight the nature of employee work as an important contextual factor determining the outcome of diversity and well-being relationship. We discuss our study findings, its implications, limitations and outline key avenues for further research.

Theoretical background and hypotheses development

Diversity and EWB

Diversity can be described as differences on any characteristic(s) based on which organizational members differ or perceive themselves to be different from others (Guillaume *et al.*, 2014). Diversity on readily visible demographic attributes such as gender or age is referred as "surface diversity." Diversity that is highly relevant in organizational set-up is "knowledge diversity" based on educational/functional background or organizational tenure (Pelled, 1996; Webber and Donahue, 2001). We respond to Shemla *et al.*'s (2016) call for advancing diversity research based on perceptions than following the traditional approach of assessing diversity through actual differences in member characteristics. The objective diversity approach is being challenged as scholars believe that people react based on perceptions of reality than reality *per se* (Acar, 2010; Harrison *et al.*, 2002; Kundu and Mor, 2017). We operationalize workforce diversity as employee perception of dissimilarity with their co-workers on surface and knowledge-level attributes.

Beyond cognitive outcomes of diversity such as performance and creativity, we contribute to the growing literature on affective effects of diversity (Jackson *et al.*, 2003; Van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007). Specifically, we focus on well-being since it is the summation of all affective feelings valuable to the individual and a higher order need in which individuals are ultimately interested (Ng, 2015). Well-being connotes strong activation and is distinct from satisfaction and commitment which denote mere gratification

(Warr and Inceoglu, 2012). An individual's well-being has various dimensions, such as social, psychological, physical, emotional and occupational. Since employees spend most of their time at work, workplace well-being forms an integral part of their overall well-being (Haile, 2012; Wilks and Neto, 2013). Well-being has been found to relate to various individual and organizational outcomes. Employees reporting high well-being were more engaged at work, creative, faced fewer health issues and outperformed those low on well-being (Lyubomirsky *et al.*, 2005). Since it directly impacts net profits, it is imperative for organizations to view EWB as central to business (Kowalski and Loretto, 2017). EWB is determined by multiple factors such as job autonomy, work demands, social support, organizational culture and leadership behavior (Kelloway *et al.*, 2013; Van der Doef and Maes, 1999; Wilks and Neto, 2013; Wood and de Menezes, 2011). We operationalize EWB as drawn from employee work environment and work characteristics. Work characteristics comprise factors describing work itself, and work environment is characterized by interpersonal relationships and working conditions.

Studies that have examined affect-related outcomes of surface-level diversity have indicated its adverse effects on employee commitment, cohesion and integration (Findler *et al.*, 2007; Nakui *et al.*, 2011). For instance, on the basis of gender dissimilarity, women respondents were found to report feelings of low social support and low attachment as compared to men (Graves and Elsass, 2005). Similarly, Triana *et al.* (2010) demonstrated that perceptions of ethnic dissimilarity negatively related to affective commitment of minority employees. These negative outcomes are often explained by the social categorization theory (Tajfel *et al.*, 1971), according to which, individuals have a natural tendency to categorize similar others as "us" and dissimilar others as "them." Owing to this creation of in/out-group, in-group members are considered more trustworthy and dependable as compared to those in the out-group (Williams and O'Reilly, 1998). Prejudices, biases and stereotypes arising out of social categorization result into decreased cooperation, communication and cohesion among employees (Milliken and Martins, 1996), thus lowering individual's feelings of inclusion, acceptance, support and well-being (Mor Barak and Levin, 2002). Hence, we expect:

H1a. Employee perception of surface diversity negatively relates to their well-being.

Studies that have examined knowledge diversity attributes have largely focused on cognitive outcomes. Since knowledge diversity may trigger task-related conflict, its impact on affective outcomes needs systematic examination (Milliken and Martins, 1996; Van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007). Van Knippenberg *et al.* (2004) proposed the categorization–elaboration model (CEM) contending that dissimilarity based on knowledge attributes, helps members focus less on categorization and more on elaboration of task-related information. Information elaboration is the primary process driving the positive effects of diversity. This is because it generates common knowledge and directs member's attention toward seeking input commonalities for task accomplishment. Collaboration and sharing of information, builds mutual trust and understanding among co-workers. Hence, dissimilar individuals on knowledge attributes feel included, valued and respected for their uniqueness, supporting their overall well-being (Kaplan and Maehr, 1999; Shore *et al.*, 2011). Hence, we expect:

H1b. Employee perception of knowledge diversity positively relates to their well-being.

Nature of employee's work

Inconclusive and mixed findings of diversity effects have been consistent across diversity literature (Webber and Donahue, 2001; Williams and O'Reilly, 1998). For instance, some studies have found negative, positive and no effect of gender diversity on performance (Jackson *et al.*, 2003). Owing to such equivocal findings, researchers have highlighted the

importance of examining diversity in a context (Guillaume *et al.*, 2014; Van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007). Nature of task/work has played an important contextual role in diversity research. Past studies have examined nature of work in several ways such as task interdependence, complexity and variety (Mannix and Neale, 2005; Mohammed and Harrison, 2013; Van Dijk *et al.*, 2012). We operationalize nature of employee's work (NEW) as the degree to which employee perceives their work to be complex. In the present study, NEW measures task ambiguity, variety, interdependence and uncertainty. Complex tasks create feelings of anxiety, self-doubt and lack of control within the individual, thereby impacting their well-being (Liu and Li, 2012).

When NEW is routine, the work processes and standards are well defined and clear. In order to break the monotony of work, as explained by the sensation-seeking theory, employees seek opportunities for stimulation (Arnett, 1994). Dissimilarity based on demographic attributes may trigger emotional conflict (Pelled *et al.*, 1999), reducing well-being. In case of knowledge diversity, task routineness may not have an impact on well-being since predictable and clear tasks do not require extensive exchange of information and discussion among co-workers (Jackson *et al.*, 2003; Van Dijk *et al.*, 2012). When NEW is complex, often there is increased communication and interaction among the task performers to address task demands (Man and Lam, 2003). Hence, prospects of employees discounting surface-level differences would be high (Schippers *et al.*, 2003). They may even employ conscious efforts (such as evoking a sense of oneness) to set aside possible differences (Joshi and Roh, 2009). Knowledge-diverse employees need to engage consciously in task-related conflicts to leverage the cognitive variety toward effective problem solving and task accomplishment. Therefore, under conditions of high task complexity, both perceived surface and knowledge diversity will enhance EWB (Kearney *et al.*, 2009; Pelled *et al.*, 1999). Hence, we expect:

- H2a.* The nature of employee work will moderate the relationship between surface diversity, well-being such that when work is complex, surface diversity improves well-being, and when work is routine, it weakens well-being.
- H2b.* The nature of employee work will moderate the relationship between knowledge diversity and well-being such that when work is complex, knowledge diversity improves well-being, and when work is routine, it has no impact on well-being.

Figure 1 demonstrates the hypothesized relationships.

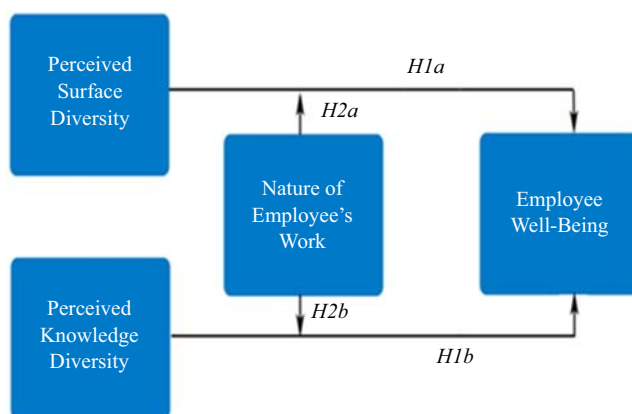


Figure 1.
Summary of hypothesized relationships

Method*Sample and procedure*

The present study is conducted in the Indian corporate manufacturing sector. This sector is an integral part of the Indian economy, contributing 30 percent to the gross domestic product (Planning Commission, Government of India, 2014–2015). India has emerged as a global manufacturing and export hub for industries such as automotive, engineering goods, chemicals and electronics, employing more than 48.54m people. With the government's "Make in India" initiative to boost employment and accelerate the growth of manufacturing industry, this sector makes a promising context for the present study.

Study sample comprised members representing private enterprises in automobile, chemical, pharmaceutical, consumer goods, energy and power and heavy engineering industries. These firms were large (with headcount above 5,000) and were noted to have higher diversity representation in their workforce (Kossek *et al.*, 2006; Mor Barak and Levin, 2002; Rynes and Rosen, 1995; Thomas and Ely, 1996). Further, respondents with above three years of organizational tenure were contacted for the purpose of felt familiarity/differences in working with others in the organization. Hence, we adopted purposive sampling in the selection of organizations and its members to participate in the study. A total of 354 respective organizational members comprised the sample for the study. Post-data screening for incomplete or missing values, we retained 311 valid responses. Table I demonstrates the distribution of samples.

Measures

Diversity. The manufacturing sector is largely homogeneous in gender with only 9.6 percent females (Paul, 2014). However, there has been rapid movement of labor force across the

Characteristics	Category	% (<i>n</i> = 311)
Gender	Women	13
	Men	87
Age (in years)	40 years or less	60
	Above 40	40
Religion	Hinduism	88
	Non-Hinduism	12
Marital status	Single	15
	Married	85
First language	Hindi	18
	Tamil	49
	Telugu	12
	Others	21
State of domicile	Tamil Nadu	59
	Other states	41
Educational qualification	Bachelors	37
	Masters	54
	Others	9
Educational background	Engineering	36
	Management	32
	Others	32
Total work experience	Less than 15 years	51
	15 years or more	49
Tenure in the organization	5 years or less	46
	More than 5 years	54
	Job category	Managerial
Domain	Non-managerial	56
	Technical	37
	Non-technical	63

Table I.
Distribution of sample

country for better employment opportunities (Agnihotri *et al.*, 2011). This migrant working population makes cultural differences one of the most significant markers of diversity in Indian corporate. Besides gender and age, which are often studied as surface diversity attributes, we included marital status, religion, first language and state of domicile as attributes that significantly characterize demographic diversity among Indian employees (Gebert *et al.*, 2011; Haq, 2012; Kulkarni, 2015; Kundu, 2003). With regard to knowledge diversity, we considered educational level, educational background, work experience, organizational tenure, functional domain and job category as salient attributes in the present study context (Mor Barak and Levin, 2002; Pelled, 1996).

We developed six items each for perceived surface diversity (PSD) and perceived knowledge diversity (PKD), drawing from existing scales (Graves and Elsass, 2005; Harrison *et al.*, 2002; Kirchmeyer, 1995). The five-point frequency scale ranged from Never to Always. Using Bartlett Test of Sphericity (BTS) and Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure for sampling adequacy, the data was found to be a good fit for factor analysis. For PSD, $BTS = 598.29$, $df = 15$, $p = 0.000$ and $KMO = 0.84$. For PKD, $BTS = 770.57$, $df = 15$, $p = 0.000$ and $KMO = 0.77$. With a Varimax rotation and principal component analysis method, we carried out exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Table II presents the rotated component matrix of the factor structure underlying surface and knowledge diversity items with factor loadings greater than 0.50. Further, we performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and used the conventional cut-off values of fit indices to assess the model fit, i.e. normed $\chi^2 < 3$, comparative fit index (CFI) > 0.90 , goodness of fit (GFI) > 0.90 , root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) < 0.06 , standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) < 0.08 (Tims *et al.*, 2013). CFA results for perceived surface and knowledge diversity suggest that the data fit well into the corresponding two factors (normed $\chi^2 = 1.40$, CFI: 0.99, GFI: 0.99, RMSEA: 0.03, SRMR: 0.02 and normed $\chi^2 = 1.63$, CFI: 0.99, GFI: 0.99,

Perceived surface diversity	Loadings	% of variance	Cronbach's α
For my work, I interact with others.....		62.10	0.81
Who are older/younger to me by ± 10 years or more	0.68		
Who are of different gender	0.63		
Who follow a different religion than mine	0.78		
Whose first language differs from mine	0.83		
Whose marital status is different from mine	0.79		
Whose state of domicile is different from mine	0.80		
<i>Perceived knowledge diversity</i>			
For my work, I interact with others.....		66.26	0.84
Whose educational qualification is different from mine	0.67		
Whose educational background is different from mine	0.76		
Whose work experience is ± 5 years or more than mine	0.79		
Whose tenure in the firm is ± 5 years or more than mine	0.84		
Whose job category differs from mine	0.81		
Whose function/domain differs from mine	0.87		
<i>Nature of employee work</i>			
My work is not clearly defined	0.75	68.52	0.73
My work has a number of dissimilar tasks	0.80		
Output of one piece of my work becomes the input for another part of my work	0.83		
My work outcomes are unpredictable	0.68		

Table II.
Factor loadings of
diversity and nature
of employee
work items

RMSEA: 0.03 and SRMR: 0.02, respectively). The measure items can be seen in Table II. Cronbach's α of PSD scale was 0.81 and PKD scale was 0.84.

Nature of employee work. Four items were directed to assess the degree to which respondents perceive their work to be complex. These included task perceptions on ambiguity, level of interdependence, variety and uncertainty involved (Liu and Li, 2012). NEW items were measured using a five-point frequency scale ranging from Never to Always. To assess the scale's structure, an EFA was conducted on the items which indicated an acceptable fit (BTS = 267.88, $df = 6$, $p = 0.000$ and $KMO = 0.74$). An examination of the component matrix with Varimax rotation showed a one-factor solution where all factor loadings were greater than 0.50 (Table II). Further, CFA results suggest a good fit of the items to the corresponding factor (normed $\chi^2 = 1.27$, CFI: 0.99, GFI: 0.99, RMSEA: 0.02, SRMR: 0.01). The measure items can be seen in Table II. Cronbach's α for this scale was 0.73.

Employee well-being. We adapted items from Warr *et al.*'s (1979) perceived intrinsic job characteristics scale to measure work characteristics, from Haynes *et al.*'s (1999) manager and peer support scales to measure interpersonal relationships and from Hayes *et al.*'s (1998) management safety practices scale to measure working conditions. Items were measured on a five-point agreement scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree). Post-CFA, we retained ten items (four for measuring work characteristics, three for interpersonal relationships and three for working conditions) with factor loadings above 0.45. Measure items in italics reflected in Table III were retained for further analysis. These items indicate a good fit to the corresponding factor (normed $\chi^2 = 1.72$, CFI: 0.99, GFI: 0.99, RMSEA: 0.03, SRMR: 0.02). Cronbach's α for this scale was 0.83.

Control variables. Three variables were chosen as controls in our study including employee gender diversity, age diversity and tenure diversity owing to past studies reporting the influence of these actual diversity variables on the results (Kundu and Mor, 2016; Shin *et al.*, 2012). Gender was dummy coded as male (0) and female (1). Age and tenure were dichotomized using sample median split (Mor Barak *et al.*, 2003). Respondents less than 40 years were coded as 0 and 1 otherwise. Likewise, respondents with tenure less than five years were coded as 0 and 1 otherwise.

CFA and common method bias (CMB). Post-CFA of the measurement model, we dropped items with factor loadings less than 0.45 (Hair *et al.*, 2010). The obtained fit indices indicate that the data fits in well with the proposed measurement model (normed $\chi^2 = 1.76$, CFI = 0.92, GFI = 0.90, RMSEA = 0.05, SRMR = 0.05). Further, we compared our hypothesized four-factor model to three-factor model (with PSD and PKD variables collapsed), two-factor model (with PSD and PKD collapsed into one factor while NEW and EWB into another factor) and one-factor model. Comparing the models using the χ^2 -difference test and fit indices (Table IV), we found that our proposed four-factor model fits the data significantly better than other alternative measurement models, supporting discriminant validity.

We used employee self-report measures in the present study, which may lend itself to CMB. However, when the constructs concerned are perception-based, self-report measures are the most appropriate and valid method for assessment (Downey *et al.*, 2015). In addition to employing procedural remedies suggested by Podsakoff *et al.* (2012) to limit CMB (such as the cover letter of questionnaire explicitly assuring respondent anonymity and data confidentiality), we used statistical tests. We employed Harman's single-factor method to detect CMB. A single factor extracted only 25.37 percent of the total variance, confirming that CMB is a non-issue.

Results

We explored how different types of diversity differentially impact EWB through multiple regression and tested for the moderating effects of NEW. Table V provides the means, standard deviations and correlations for all the control and study variables. Variance inflation factor was

Items	CFA loadings
<i>Perceived intrinsic job characteristics scale</i>	
I get the freedom to choose my own method of working	0.31
I am given an adequate amount of responsibility	0.29
I get recognition for good work	0.42
I am able to judge my work performance, right away, when actually doing the job	0.63
I get the opportunity to use my abilities	0.68
There is variety in my job	0.39
There is a chance of promotion	0.41
The attention paid to suggestions I make	0.43
I feel I am doing something which is not trivial, but really worthwhile.	0.71
I do a whole and complete piece of work.	0.67
<i>Manager and peer support scales</i>	
My supervisor encourages me to give my best effort	0.40
My supervisor sets an example by working hard him/herself	0.32
My supervisor offers new ideas for solving job-related problems	0.39
My supervisor encourages those who work for him/her to work as a team	0.37
My supervisor listens to me when I talk about problems at work	0.77
My supervisor helps me with a difficult task at work	0.62
My colleagues listen to me when I talk about problems at work	0.43
I can count on my colleagues to back me up at work	0.78
I can count on my colleagues to help me with a difficult task at work	0.40
I can really count on my colleagues to help me in a crisis situation at work, even though they would have to go out of their way to do so	0.42
<i>Management safety practices scale</i>	
My organization provides enough safety training programs	0.23
My organization conducts frequent safety inspections	0.36
My organization investigates safety problems quickly	0.40
My organization rewards safe workers	0.28
My organization provides safe equipment	0.26
My organization provides safe working conditions	0.77
My organization responds quickly to safety concerns	0.55
My organization helps maintain clean work area	0.34
My organization provides safety information.	0.25
My organization keeps us informed of hazards	0.64

Notes: Items whose values are in italics were retained for further analysis. Cronbach's α for this scale = 0.83

Table III.
CFA loadings
of employee
well-being items

Model	χ^2/df	CFI	GFI	RMSEA	SRMR	χ^2 -difference test
Four-factor target model	1.76	0.92	0.90	0.05	0.05	
Three-factor model	2.18	0.85	0.84	0.06	0.07	***
Two-factor model	2.35	0.79	0.78	0.07	0.07	***
One-factor model	2.71	0.74	0.72	0.08	0.09	***

Notes: χ^2 difference of each model reflects its deviation from the four-factor model. *** $p < 0.001$

Table IV.
Model comparison for
discriminant validity

observed as 2.05 (less than the commonly accepted threshold of 10) indicating low possibility of multi-collinearity among the independent variables (Kundu and Mor, 2017). The control variables did not show a significant correlation with the dependent variable well-being. Among the study variables, all correlations were significant except between PKD and NEW ($r = 0.34$, $p > 0.01$). We checked for the assumptions of normality through normal probability plotting and tested for similar variances by plotting the residuals on the fitted values.

Regression analyses

Table VI depicts multiple regression results indicating that both PSD ($\beta = 0.19, t = 2.66, p = 0.008$) and PKD ($\beta = 0.14, t = 1.93, p = 0.05$) significantly predict well-being. Thus, *H1a* is significant but opposite to the proposed direction and *H1b* is supported as proposed. Further, NEW had a significant impact on EWB ($\beta = -0.30, t = -5.82, p = 0.000$). The control variables did not significantly impact well-being. *F*-statistic of 27.76 ($p = 0.000, df = 5, 305$) shows that the overall model is significant with an adjusted R^2 of 20.6 percent.

Testing for moderation

Table VII shows the interaction effects between PSD, PKD and NEW on EWB. We used model 1 in SPSS PROCESS Macro to test for moderation (Hayes, 2013). While 21.69 percent of variance in well-being was accounted for by the main effects of PSD and NEW ($F(6, 304) = 11.85, p = 0.000$), their interaction did not account for any additional variance beyond the main effects ($\Delta R^2 = 0.01, \Delta F(1, 304) = 2.25, p = 0.135$), thereby not supporting *H2a*.

The main effects of PKD and NEW ($F(6, 304) = 9.70, p = 0.000$) accounted for 21.14 percent of variance in well-being, and we found support for *H2b*. A significant interaction between PKD and NEW on EWB was evident (coeff = 0.12, $p = 0.075$). The interaction between PKD and NEW accounted for an additional 1 percent variance ($\Delta R^2 = 0.01, \Delta F(1, 304) = 3.17, p = 0.075$) beyond the main effects. Figure 2 illustrates regression lines for the effect of PKD on well-being. Corresponding to our hypothesis, there was no significant relationship between PKD and EWB when work complexity was low (blue line), whereas a strong positive relationship (coeff = 0.32, $p = 0.000$) existed under conditions of high complexity (yellow line).

Table V.
Means, standard deviations and intercorrelations among study variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age diversity	0.39	0.27	–						
2. Gender diversity	0.14	0.21	-0.08	–					
3. Tenure diversity	0.51	0.33	0.32*	-0.05	–				
4. PSD	3.98	0.70	0.09	0.13*	-0.01	–			
5. PKD	3.89	0.70	0.08	0.04	-0.03	0.71**	–		
6. NEW	2.11	0.76	-0.11	-0.15*	-0.07	-0.17**	0.34	–	
7. EWB	3.79	0.55	0.09	0.04	-0.01	0.35**	0.30**	-0.34**	–

Notes: PSD, perceived surface diversity; PKD, perceived knowledge diversity; NEW, nature of employee work; EWB, employee well-being. * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$

Table VI.
Main effects of perceptions of diversity on employee well-being

Independent variables	<i>B</i>	SE	β	<i>t</i>
Age	-0.08	0.06	-0.07	-1.27 ^{ns}
Gender	-0.01	0.08	-0.01	-0.13 ^{ns}
Tenure	0.03	0.06	0.03	0.54 ^{ns}
Perceived surface diversity	0.15	0.06	0.19	2.66**
Perceived knowledge diversity	0.11	0.06	0.14	1.93*
Nature of employee work	-0.22	0.04	-0.30	-5.82***
Constant	3.21	0.19		16.18***
R^2 (%)	21.3			
Adjusted R^2 (%)	20.6			
<i>F</i> ($df = 5, 305$)	27.76***			

Notes: ns, not significant. * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$

Variables	coeff	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Perceived surface diversity</i>				
Constant	3.76	0.03	132.70	0.000
Age	-0.05	0.06	-0.85	0.396
Gender	0.06	0.07	0.79	0.428
Tenure	0.06	0.06	0.99	0.323
Perceived surface diversity	0.23	0.04	5.50	0.000***
Nature of employee's work	-0.21	0.04	-4.73	0.000***
Perceived surface diversity × nature of employee's work	0.10	0.06	1.49	0.135
<i>R</i> ²	21.69%			
<i>F</i> (6, 304)	11.85***			
<i>R</i> ² change	0.011			
<i>F</i> (1, 304)	2.25			
<i>Perceived knowledge diversity</i>				
Constant	3.79	0.03	135.41	0.000
Age	-0.04	0.06	-0.62	0.534
Gender	0.02	0.07	0.27	0.782
Tenure	0.05	0.06	0.76	0.449
Nature of employee's work	-0.24	0.04	-5.55	0.000***
Perceived knowledge diversity × nature of employee's work	0.12	0.06	1.78	0.075***
<i>R</i> ²	21.14%			
<i>F</i> (6, 304)	9.70***			
<i>R</i> ² change	0.014			
<i>F</i> (1, 304)	3.17			

Notes: ****p* ≤ 0.001; *****p* < 0.10

Table VII.
Moderation effects of nature of employee work on perceived surface and knowledge diversity

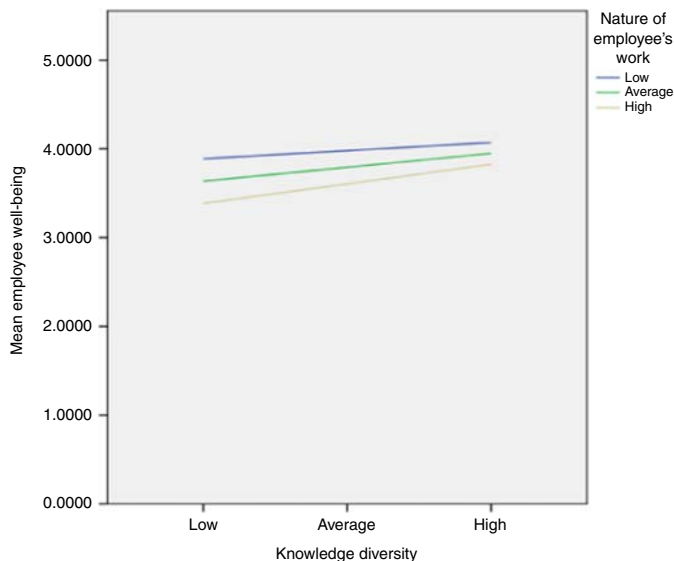


Figure 2.
Interaction between perceived knowledge diversity and nature of employee's work on employee well-being

Discussion

Main effects

This study investigates Indian employee's perception of diversity in their firms impacting their well-being. We hypothesized that perceived surface and knowledge diversity will have

a differential impact on well-being. Basis literature, we proposed that readily evident characteristics form a basis of categorization – similar others get included, are treated as more dependable and trustworthy, whereas these social processes are hampered with dissimilar others. This lack of inclusion and integration may reduce well-being at work. However, contrary to this (*H1a*), we found PSD to enhance well-being. Since we did not examine the impact of each diversity attribute on well-being separately, it is difficult for us to ascertain that positive perception of which specific demographic characteristic(s) led to the favorable effect on well-being. However, drawing on the characteristics of the industry that comprised our data set, we observe Indian manufacturing industry to be highly homogeneous with respect to gender, for instance. Hence, gender diversity is considered as variety (Harrison and Klein, 2007), acknowledging differential strength and talent base among genders. In the present study, perhaps the male-dominated sample has acknowledged this distinctiveness; hence, we found overall positive levels of well-being. Further, sampled organizations were large and had global operations. With a credo to promote diversity, sensitization through mentoring and inclusion programs, most of these organizations have internalized diversity as a “value” beyond mere minority representation (Kundu, 2004). Our findings indicate that Indian employees appreciate and value individual dissimilarity, thus, harnessing diversity toward favorable affective outcomes. We found support for *H1b* that PKD will have favorable impact on well-being. Building on CEM, we contend that employees working with others who are dissimilar on knowledge attributes are less likely to categorize based on demographics. Rather, they are more motivated to elaborate on the enlarged pool of information, skills and abilities present among co-workers toward accomplishing the task and enhancing affect (Van Knippenberg *et al.*, 2004).

Moderation effects

Our findings indicate that while NEW did not have any impact on the PSD–EWB relationship; there was a significant impact in the PKD–EWB link. As hypothesized (*H2b*), we found knowledge diversity to be positively related to well-being of employees whose work was complex, whereas it did not impact well-being of those whose work was standardized and routine.

By proposing and testing task complexity as a moderator in the PSD–EWB relationship, we address Van Dijk *et al.*'s (2012) concern that this moderator has been “overrepresented” in knowledge diversity research and “underrepresented” in demographic diversity studies. While nature of task has been employed as a moderator in previous studies (e.g. Mannix and Neale, 2005; Mohammed and Harrison, 2013), our study *H2a* did not find support. This may be because, generally, complex jobs require advanced levels of skills and expertise derived from education and training as compared to the behaviors acquired from demographic attributes. Further, our findings can be explained by the work characteristics of the respondents. The mean score of NEW (Table V) indicates that the respondents consider their work as predictable and routine. Most work in manufacturing industry is highly procedural and standardized. Employees may have lesser chances of being in highly uncertain and ambiguous projects – hence, they view their work to be routine (Joshi and Roh, 2009). In a situation where employees may not have experienced work complexity (uncertainty and ambiguity), our study finding suggests that surface-level dissimilarities do not significantly impact their well-being. Moreover, categorization due to readily observable attributes may occur naturally among individuals, irrespective of the fact whether the nature of their work is complex or routine. This fundamental behavior is by and large accepted by organizational members. Hence, work complexity did not impact the surface diversity and well-being relationship. Nevertheless, the same argument may not be applicable in case of knowledge

diversity as here members consciously seek differences in expertise. This deliberate effort to harness knowledge-level differences is further enhanced when work is complex, hence supporting *H2b*. Accordingly, Van Dijk *et al.* (2012) indicate that complex tasks may moderate knowledge diversity effects because knowledge and expertise is required to solve highly complex problems than employees engaging in regular and routine work.

Implications, limitations and future scope

The empirical findings of the study highlight positive and important effects of diversity perceptions on well-being of organizational members, contrary to the traditional reactive and negative stance. The results may be useful for guiding the future theory development and diversity management.

Study highlights understanding diversity dynamics through perceptions than measuring actual diversity. Most often researchers assess the impact of diversity characteristics on various outcomes with assumptions related to perceptions of those characteristics (Kirchmeyer, 1995). It is assumed that the philosophies behind diversity attributes *per se* and its perceptions are same. However, from an organizational standpoint, examining perceptions will have “more proximal explanatory power than actual diversity” (Harrison and Klein, 2007, p. 1216), as practitioners agree that perceptions of social environment create stronger and direct impact on diversity outcomes as compared to the actual social environment (Acar, 2010; Zellmer-Bruhn *et al.*, 2008). We advance empirical research on perceived diversity which is a construct of growing research interest (Shemla *et al.*, 2016).

Extant conceptualization of diversity has been either around all diversity attributes combined as a single index or studies focusing on specific diversity attributes such as gender, age or tenure. Bacharach (1989) supported the former approach that combining dissimilarity attributes will increase overall explanatory power in predicting diversity effects. However, this macro view of diversity effect often omits specific nuances of distinct attributes. Hence, Pelled (1996) suggested a “middle-ground approach” to cluster diversity types based on two dimensions – attribute visibility and extent of job-relatedness. Subscribing to this clustering of diversity types, we considered relatedness amongst dissimilar attributes (based on demography and knowledge attributes) to view the distinct effects they yield. It is important that managers view demographic diversity and knowledge-based diversity distinctly, owing to differing characteristics each diversity type entails and the differential effects they may exhibit (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2012).

Hence, we cognized that different types of diversity will differentially impact EWB, whereas we found that perceptions of surface and knowledge diversity to positively influence EWB. This positive finding indicates that perceptions of demographic diversity need not necessarily create categories that evoke undesirable stereotypes, biases and prejudices. Study findings demonstrate that bases of differentiation and categorization fundamental to social beings, get nullified by diversity-related mentoring and inclusive organizational policies. In a similar vein, respondent profile represented multinational organizations where diversity and inclusion are business strategies contributing to key outcomes. Diversity is desirable when organizational initiatives and HR processes enable effective diversity management (Guillaume *et al.*, 2013; Kundu, 2001). Moreover, we recognize how contemporary organizational leaders in global as well as domestic firms in India are actively streamlining their efforts in building a diversity supportive culture mitigating conflicts and negative perceptions. Not surprisingly, several firms in India value employee uniqueness while simultaneously fostering an environment of belongingness. Further, unity in diversity is in congruence with the Indian national ethos of social harmony and collectivism. Hence, organizational efforts must be systematic and continuous to uphold the diversity agenda and reap its positive effects.

Past research illustrates that infusing diversity into the workforce will not ascertain favorable outcomes; whereas mismanagement of diversity does create an environment of mistrust, inefficient utilization of diverse employees and negative impact on individual/organizational outcomes (Guillaume *et al.*, 2013, 2014). While sampled firms in the present study are known market leaders and benchmarks for championing diversity, small business enterprises must note that mere diversity representation will not yield any benefits. For instance, Enchautegui-de-Jesus *et al.* (2006) cite how the proportion of diversity influences outcomes to find an inverted U-shaped relation between ethnic diversity and EWB with low/high proportion of ethnic diversity lowering well-being. Likewise, inclusive organizational policies and practices is the key to harness diversity than mere infusing diversity. Hence, these hold importance in terms of workforce composition and distribution.

Study findings on how knowledge diversity, coupled with complex work enhances well-being, holds key implications with respect to work design. Firms must consider knowledge diversity while designing team tasks, as diverse skills and expertise of members helps create differential cognitive inputs to address complexities efficiently. Such work experiences and interactions in addressing complex tasks, propels sense of achievement and development of positive affective diversity effects (Shore *et al.*, 2009).

Present study is not without limitations and provides directions for future work as relevant. Government of India projects an increase of 100m employees in the manufacturing sector in the next five years, increasing the likelihood of women and migrant worker's representation (Planning Commission, Government of India, 2014–2015). With proportion of diversity having a known influence on employee experiences (Enchautegui-de-Jesus *et al.*, 2006), changing workforce composition must be noted as a “dynamic” determinant of diversity's affective effects (Srikanth *et al.*, 2016). Likewise, work and workforce composition may differ significantly under varied industrial contexts. Hence, future work on surface and knowledge diversity must be examined in industrial contexts other than a manufacturing sector such as service/high-technology industry (Joshi and Roh, 2009; Kundu and Mor, 2017). Beyond industry setting, it is important to consider other key contextual factors inside/outside the organizational boundaries. While we highlighted proximal and immediate contextual factor (nature of employee work) at a micro level, external/internal contextual factors such as national culture, occupational demography, organizational culture and strategy would help explain the prevalence and strength of the observed diversity effects (Jackson *et al.*, 2003; Joshi and Roh, 2009; Shore *et al.*, 2009).

The present cross-sectional findings may be complemented by longitudinal research. Time and familiarity often blur the categorical distinctions with lesser asynchronies to resolve among co-workers (Mohammed and Harrison, 2013). The consideration of temporal dynamics in diversity research is important as time association smoothens disparities and increased familiarity with the task and co-workers, motivates individuals toward cohesion and social capital (Mayo *et al.*, 2016). Further, current diversity research draws heavily on traditional theories such as social categorization/similarity attraction to explain diversity effects. Likewise, Mayo *et al.* (2016) note that “empirical reality tends to relax the ideal conditions of diversity theories, rendering any single theory largely incomplete” (p. 11). Toward advancing diversity theory, future researchers may reflect upon more recently proposed metatheoretical frameworks by Mayo *et al.* (2016) and Guillaume *et al.* (2017). Employing these integrative models will not only limit the overreliance on established theories (often leading to rejection of ideas occurring serendipitously), but also encourage the consideration of macro-level theories and a multitude of contexts in the conceptual space (Shore *et al.*, 2009).

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