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Employees' Perceptions of Multiculturalism and Diversity in Multinational Corporations

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In a constantly changing global business environment, multiculturalism and diversity are becoming important discussion topics for multinational corporations. Moreover, these topics have witnessed increased attention as globalisation is affecting all facets of the economy. This paper presents findings of a study of multiculturalism and diversity in multinational corporations (MNCs) in Singapore. Highlighted are outcomes of a survey about understanding employees' perceptions of multiculturalism and diversity, understanding employees' opinions of the relationship between multiculturalism and productivity, and identifying perceptions of benefits (or non-benefits) of these factors in the workplace. One hundred sixty-four employees of MNCs in Singapore were selected for this study. The questionnaire method of data collection was used and hypotheses were analysed using the chi square, cross-tabulations, coefficient of correlations, and regression analysis techniques. The findings revealed a strong relationship between employees' perceptions of a multicultural and diverse workforce and individual and organisational productivity. Additionally, an organizational culture that encourages diversity and employee involvement as well as creates a sense of ownership and responsibility is important for the management of a successful, diverse, and happy workplace. The findings suggest that managers of MNCs need to be proactive in their approach to addressing multiculturalism and diversity.

Key words: Multiculturalism, diversity, multinational corporations, workforce, employees' perceptions.

INTRODUCTION

In a constantly changing global business environment, multiculturalism and diversity are becoming important discussion topics for multinational corporations. Multi-culturalism and diversity in the workplace have witnessed increased attention as globalisation is affecting all facets of the economy. Many organisations now operate without many barriers in countries other than their home countries.The concept of globalisation is one in which people, companies, and governments of different nations interact and integrate with one another to take advantage of international trade and investments aided by infor-mation technology. According to some observers, the world has become a "global village" granting managers many challenging opportunities where the effects of economic boom or downturn or unrest in one part of the world affect an organisation in other parts (Robbins and Judge, 2007; Daft, 2010; Mathis and Jackson, 2004).

Culture defines people and people are the main stakeholders in international business. It is virtually impossible to discuss work related topics without the issue of culture coming up. "Culture is what enables groups to function smoothly" (Hofstede, 2002). In today's workforce, interaction of employees from different countries, regions, and cultures is the norm; it is a

reflection of the various cultures that exist in our world. There is no one definition of culture that is universally accepted as culture varies from one country, region within a country, or geographic region in the world to the other. Generally it means specific characteristics of customs, social patterns, beliefs, and values of people in a particular country or region, or in a particular racial or religious group (Torrington and Hall, 1998).

Managers of successful MNCs believe that attaining diversity in the workforce yields many positive social, legal, strategic, and competitive benefits for an organization (Sacco and Schmitt, 2005). Cross-cultural teams are also enriching to the organization as observed by Stanislas De Quercize, currently president and chief executive of Van Cleer&Arpels and future chief executive of Cartier,"We create for the world. To achieve that, it's extremely enriching to have diversity around the table: diversity ofgender, of age, of nationalities" (Kolesnikov-Jessop, 2012). A multicultural work force is inclusive of employees of different nationalities, ethnicities, races, religions, education, and genders, while managing a multicultural workforce extends the differences to changing the mind-sets of the combination of employees and organization culture.

According to a survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) in the late 1990s, more than 80 percent of the Fortune 500 companies either had a diversity program or were planning to implement one within the next year (Crosby and Stockdale, 1998). An understanding of corporate multiculturalism and diversity afford opportunities for multinational corporations to gain market share, increase productivity, maintain competitive advantage, maximize profits, and increase efficiency in a highly competitive economic environment. As organisations seek to increase sales, acquisitions, mergers, expansions, and influence in other countries, the issues of culture and diversity become important factors to consider. It is believed that Multi-culturalism and diversity are critical and necessary for the effective conduct of business operations because an understanding of different cultures and the way people diversity interfaces with the daily activities essential for business success. Recently Goldman Sachs and MetLife announced plans to disclose their diversity data to stakeholders citing studies "that have shown a benefit of a diverse workforce on company performance and long-term shareowner value, and many companies say they are making serious efforts to recruit, retain and promote women and minorities" (McGeehan, 2012, quoting John C. Lui, New York City's comptroller).

Few studies or analyses have been conducted to seek employees' perceptions of multiculturalism and diversity in multinational corporations. This paper seeks to close that gap by presenting findings of a study of multiculturalism and diversity in multinational corporations (MNCs) in Singapore. Highlighted are outcomes of a survey about understanding employees' perceptions of multiculturalism and diversity and identifying perceptions of benefits (or non-benefits) of these factors in the work-place. Many MNCs recognise that there are challenges and opportunities regarding cultural diversity in the work place. The focus is the contribution of the cultural diversity mix to the organizational goals of maximizing profit, productivity, and morale of corporate members (Karunakaran, 2009).

Multiculturalism and Diversity in MNCs

The significance of multiculturalism and diversity in the workplace is reflected in the amount of attention accorded them by academics via publication of books and articles, academic institutions as reflected in the curriculum offerings, and organizations as shown in training programs, managers and entrepreneurs relating to understanding managing these two areas (Cox, 2001; Kossek, et al., 2003; Thiederman, 2003; Stockdale and Crosby, 2004; Cascio, 1998; Torrington and Hall, 1998; Dessler and Varkkey, 2009; Mathis and Jackson, 2004). However, there is not enough research on the employee perceptions of multiculturalism and diversity in the MNCs workplaces. Failure to consider the perceptions of employees of MNCs may lead to designing and implementing diversity management programs that are not useful to the organisations and employees.

Though research exploring the importance of multi-culturalism and diversity in the workplace is readily available, there isa scarcity of information on the perceptions of employees regarding multiculturalism and diversity in MNCs. Singapore provides an ideal setting to study these issues. Singapore is culturally very diverse and this is reflected in the workforce. Many MNCs operate in Singapore making it a suitable country in which to conduct research on the managerial practices and employees' perceptions of multiculturalism and diversity. The geographic and economic settings are inspirations to research multiculturalism and diversity in MNCs in order to gain employees' perspectives on these topics. Though the findings cannot be fully adapted in other cultural settings, this study nevertheless provides managers of MNCs worthwhile and current information.

Diversity in Multinational Corporations

Multinational corporations by the nature of their strategic position employ people from various cultures, countries, and regions. Empirical research linking multiculturalism

and diversity suggest that Human Resources (HR) professionals and job seekers believe these initiatives make organisations more successful (Mathis and Jackson, 2007). Many MNCs are realising the need and importance of re-evaluating their Human Resources Management (HRM) policies to reflect the rapid increase in diversity and multiculturalism within their societies. MNCs embrace these changes as adding to organisational value in order to foster the appropriate appreciation for other cultures (Koshy, 2010).

While research indicates that there are benefits of diversity in the work place, the challenges can be overwhelming. White (2010) argues that these challenges lie in the continuous improvement of the integration and social acceptance of people from dissimilar backgrounds. He emphasises that the differences in human characteristics naturally influence the way people think, act, interact, and make choices. Accordingly, these differrences interfere with people's abilities to support, trust, and respect each other in a productive manner. Many organisations see direct benefits from incorporating diverse peoples and perspectives into the work environment. White (2010) suggests that organisations make it a goal to change and or create a culture that recognises, respects, and encourages individual differences.

Wenting's (2004) study of diversity initiatives in multicultural corporations in the United States found that having a strategic plan for diversity initiatives, integrating diversity initiatives into the corporation's strategic plan, recognising that diversity is a business imperative, having a culture that values diversity, and having top management support were the factors most likely to assist in the success of diversity initiatives. The study concluded that lack of understanding the value of diversity; competing agendas, size, and complexity of the corporation; and economic changes were barriers mostlikely to hinder the success of diversity initiatives in MNCs.A study to highlight employee diversity at the workplace level in an MNC and to consider its impact upon management attempts to promote a global corporate culture was carried out by Moore and Rees (2008). It was found that the management approach to cultural and diversity issues worked both for and against the development of cohesion and improved employee relations. Managers sometimes ignored the real impact of local ethnic diversity, focusing instead on inter-management conflicts, which contributed to employee morale and communication problems. The key implication for managers is that the successful implementation of global corporate strategies works best if MNCs acknowledge local workforce identities and engage positively with local historical and cultural traditions.

Adler (1983) studied extensively cross-cultural management which deals with traditional organizational behaviour issues such as motivation, leadership, decision making, and group dynamics research. The central questions raised are: What is the impact, if any, of culture on the behaviour of people within organizations? To what extent, if at all, must managerial styles be altered when working with people from different cultures? To what extent is the managing of cross-cultural interaction different from managing interaction within culturally homogeneous groups? The commitment of an MNC is critical in addressing these questions as Taylor et al. (2008) discovered through studying 1664 core employees of 39 affiliates of 10 MNCs. Organizational culture and human resource management affect employee commitment directly as well as indirectly through top management team orientations. An organisational culture characterized by high adaptability and an HRM system characterised by high performance work practices have significant and direct effect on employee commitment.

Globally, the composition of the workforce is changing in part due to the increase in movements of people from one part of the world to anotheror from one part of a country to another. This world phenomenon requires organisations to pay attention to managing a diverse workforce. While D'Netto et al. (n.d.) found that discrimination does not exist in the Australian manufacturing sector, diversity is not valued and these organisations have not capitalized on the benefits of workforce diversity which are perceived to include a stronger work ethic among multicultural employees, greater opportunities to learn from other cultures, lower absenteeism, and lesslabourturnover. A growing body of research shows that organisations with positive corporate cultures are effective in promoting a highly skilled multicultural workforce. McMillan (2010) conducted a study to determine if group mean differences in cultural perception exist between people of different generation, gender, and ethnicity and found that there were no significant group mean differences in cultural dimension for gender, generation, or ethnicity. It is clear that the issue of multi-cultures and diversity is significant in the current borderless global business environment as increasing numbers of people move between countries and continents in search of working opportunities (Da Silva, 2008). Wentling and Palma (2000) concluded that multinationalcorporations are planning, implementing, and evaluating a large number and variety of diversity initiatives not only in the United States but also internationally.

Generational Diversity Issues

The United States Department of Laborde fines the labour force as beginning at age 16. This means that in today's workforce there are five generations: traditionalist – aged;

70[+], Baby Boomers – aged 50s/60s, Generation X – aged 35 to 50, Millennials – aged 20s to early 30s, and Generation "I"/Alpha – teens (Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2009; Glaser and Miller, 2012) . Furthermore, studies indicate that the fast demographic changes in the society will be reflected in the future workforce with younger workers, more females, more diversity, and more educated employees (Agno, 2010; Burke, 2004; Chirico and Nordqvist, 2010; Armour, 2005). This raises the question of whether generational diversity matters even as D'Vera (2008) caution that baby boomers could be the gloomiest generation ever; thus posing unforeseen workplace challenges for managers (Cauchon, 2010). Their distinctive experiences and attributes directly influence their attitudes towards work and expectations for their participation. A 2007 Society of Human Resource Management survey found some possible areas of conflict in the workplace attributed to the changing workforce. Common areas of possible conflict include work ethic, organizational hierarchy, acceptance of organizational hierarchies, dealing with change, and managing technology. Many researches focus on the challenges and opportunities presented by generational diversity and links to organizational outcomes (Murphy et al. 2010; Marston, 2007; Martin and Tulgan, 2006). The study of the perceptions of cross generational employees about their views of this unfolding phenomenon can provide valuable information to organizations to adequately minimize differences and capitalize on the collective strengths. One objective of this study is to explore this aspect.

Purpose of Study

This paper discusses employees' perceptions of multi-culturalism and diversity in MNCs in Singapore. Multiculturalism/diversity issues are directly linked to economic interests and political power. Because globa-lization is facilitating the movement of talent across national borders with relative ease, it is necessary to study employees of MNCs as these corporations spread around the world. Multiculturalism for the purpose of this study is viewed as adoctrine asserting the value of different cultures coexisting within a single society and globally, a vision of cultural diversity deliberately fostered and protected (The Globalisation Website, 2011). A multicultural workforce is inclusive of managing a multi-cultural workforce that is "concerned with theorganisation image, process awareness, interpersonal awareness/ sensitivity, developing subordinates and gaining commit-ment" where all members participate fully (Torrington and Hall, 1998, p. 373). Diversity can simply be seen as recognising the differences among people (Mathis and

Jackson, 2004). While multiculturalism refers to the presence of people with several different cultures in a specific setting, diversity is also defined as a set of human characteristics by which people are perceived or perceive themselves as different from each other. These characteristics include age, gender, sexual orientation, diagnosed disability, ethnicity, citizenship, religious affiliation, ideology and politics, marital status, job classifi-cation, rank, and income and socioeconomic, as well as geographic and regional, differences (Cachon, 2005). Generally, diversity is understood as acknowledging, understanding, accepting, valuing, and celebrating differences among people with respect to age, class, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, race, sexual orientation, spiritual practice, and public assistance status (Kelli and Green, 2002, quoted in Koshy (2010). An organisation is considered to be multinational if it has many foreign subsidiaries in foreign countries; operates in a wide variety of countries around the globe; the pro-portion of assets, revenues, or profits produced in foreign countries is high; and itsoverseas operations are much more ambitious than just sales offices, including a full range of manufacturing and research and development (R&D) activities (Downes and Goodman, 1998; Spero and Hart, 1997).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is summarised in Figure 1 in the Appendix. MNCs employ workers from diverse cultures and backgrounds who work together to accomplish organisational goals. HRM policies are developed to motivate and encourage increased produc-tivity from employees. If employees perceive these policies negatively, their attitudes may change and affect their productivity and satisfaction with the organisation. This conceptual framework links areas of employees' perceptions (centre left) to HR activities (centre right) to the MNC. Employees evaluate the MNC on its handling of multicultural and diversity workforce which influences their perception. HRM practices with reference to Multiculturalism and diversity impact employees' perceptions of MNC in the centre.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

This study examined the following specific research questions:

1) Do employees of MNCs perceive their organisation's policies on multicultural diversity positively?
2) Do employees of an MNC that values multiculturalism

and diversity perceive the practices as increasing organisational morale? and

3) What are the perceived benefits (or non-benefits) of multiculturalism and diversity in the workplace?

Two hypotheses were tested:

1) Younger employees' perceptions of multiculturalism and diversity are different from those of older employees and

2) There is a significant relationship between HRM practices of MNCs with reference to multiculturalism and diversity.

METHODOLOGY

The mixed methodology approach and empirical research were applied in this study. The mixed methods approach is characterized as research that contains elements of both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Rocco, et al., 2003). Data collection through questionnaires was conducted using the face-to-face method which was convenient as many MNCs in Singapore are located near the mass rapid transport station. The study used the qualitative approach in answering the research questions. Quantitative techniques (descriptive) were used to analyse the data. Frequencies and percentages were used to describe the qualitative data.One limitation of this research approach is that it excludes workers who drove to work or took other means of transportation.

Population and Sample

The study population is employees and managers of MNCs in Singapore. Singapore is endowed with many ethnic groups reflecting the multicultural and diverse topics which are the focus of this research. The groups are Chinese 74.1 per cent, Malay 13.4 percent, Indian 9.2 percent, and others 3.3 percent. Singapore has four official languages: Malay, Mandarin, Tamil, and English. The national language is Malay. With the diversity in cultures comes diversity in religions. The major religious groups are: Buddhism 42.5 percent, Islam 14.9 percent, Christianity 14.6 percent, Taoism 8.5 percent, Hinduism four per cent, other religions 0.7 percent, and no religion 14.8 percent (Statistics Singapore, Census of Population 2000).

The sample size for this study was set at 120 to represent the population of employees of MNCs. Though this sample is small comparatively, it is thought that it will be a representation of the population; it also reflects sampling error. However, the final responses were 164, far exceeding the 120 that was deemed adequate for this study. The sample in this study is based on the population of five MNCs in Singapore.

Data Collection

After identifying the employees and managers of MNCs in Singapore and receiving consent of the participants, the researcher administeredand collected completed questionnaires which included open and closed-ended questions as well as "ranking" and "scale or rating" questions.

The non-probability sampling technique, specifically, the purposive sampling (judgement sampling) technique, was applied to ensure participants work in an MNC in Singapore. Participants were selected because they were in the position to provide the best information to satisfy the research objectives. Additionally, heterogeneous sampling was needed to get participants that provided a variety of information. The survey was conducted over a period of three months during working days from 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. when most workers go to work and from 3:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. when workers usually return from work.

After data were collected and before being analysed, the researcher examined them to ensure their completeness and validity. Missing data were noted during editing before coding, transformation, and entering the data into SPSS statistical program. Two questions requiring respondents to indicate their degree of agreement using a Likert scale (1= strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree) were stated in the negative. These were reversed during the coding process. A total of 173 surveys were completed but nine had missing data on several questions and were excluded from the total.

Data Analysis

The data from the questionnaires were content analysed. General statistical techniques were used to analyse the data. For qualitative data analysis, the content analysis technique was applied where the responses were carefully reviewed more than once and points and ideas identified and noted. To ensure content validity, the researcher used an advisory committee of four industrial experts and received feedback that was used in finalising the questionnaire and to ensure consistency (reliability), the Cronbach's alpha test obtained .837, indicating more than 80 per cent validity. Additionally to ensure reliability in the Likert scale like questions, a Cronbach's alpha test was conducted and yielded a value of .921 suggesting reliability of more than 90 per cent.

For qualitative data analysis, the content analysis technique was applied where the responses were carefully reviewed more than once and points and ideas identified and noted. A table was constructed to note what each code stands for. Quantitative data analysis was performed after coding (numbers), for example, Yes = 0; No = 1, and results generated for interpretation. General descryptive statistics such as percentages were performed and shown in bar graphs. Other analysis tests used were: Cross-tabulation to examine interdependence between variables; The Chi square to determine the frequency distribution of responses on two or more sets of variables; Pearson's correlation coefficient (r); A regression coefficient; and a T-test.

RESULTS

Demographics and Percentages

This section presents the demographic profile of the respondents as well as the results of the study by research question and hypotheses tested.The demographic profile of 164 respondents is presented. The descriptions included religion, ethnicity, gender, income, age, education, length of service in the company, and position. Demographic summaries provide important information needed

to understand the nature of multiculturalism and diversity in MNC workplaces and are summarised below.

Most of the respondents belonged to four religions: Christians (31.70 %); Hindus (25.61 %); Muslims (20.73%); and Buddhists (13.41%).The sample population's ethnicity shows that Chinese are the majority of employees (23.17%) followed by Malays (20.73 %) and Indians(18.90%).With respect to gender,64.60% of the respondents are male and 35.65% are female which indicates that men are more likely to work in MNCs.The age range 33-40 is the majority responding group with 35.37 %, followed by the age ranges 41–48 and 26–32 respectively. The majority of respondents have post graduate experience (22.26%) followed by graduate degree (21.95%) and bachelor's degree (18.29%) respectively.

The sample populations' income indicates that the income bracket S$6501 – S$8000 constituted 37.19% of the respondents, followed by income level below S$2000 (21.34%), and S$5001 – S$6500 (18.90%) respec-tively.Respondents with two to six years of experience and ten or more years represented about 41% and about 22 % of respondents respectively.Ninety eight (59.76%) of the respondents have previously worked with a MNC.Fifty seven (34.76%) of respondents are in managerial positions followed by sixty eight (41.46%) in executive or professional positions.

The respondents ranked "globalised feeling/positive image of the organisation" (34.76%) as the best reason for working in a MNC followed by "teamwork/different problem solving views*" (29.88%), and followed by increased productivity/ enlarged talent pool (26.83%). "Grouping employees into races/cultures and income-patibility of cultures and ideas" (27.44%) was ranked by respondents as the worst thing about working in an MNC followed by: "Encourages bias and discrimination/ encourages laziness and stress" (23.78%).Fifty one respondents (31.10%) ranked "perceived costs" as the greatest barrier to diversity/multiculturalism in MNCs followed by "lack of top-level commitment" (28.66%) and "middle management resistance" (18.29%).

Research Questions Outcomes

The results of this study are summarized in two major sections corresponding to the research questions: (a) do employees of MNCs perceive their organisation's policies on multicultural diversity positively? (b) do employees of an MNC perceive their organisation as valuing multi-culturalism and diversity and as increasing organizational morale and productivity?and (c) what are the perceived benefits (or non-benefits) of multiculturalism and diversity in the workplace?

Employees' perceptions of multiculturalism and diversity

One hundred twenty seven (77.44%) respondents stron-gly agreed or agreed to the statement "A multicultural and diverse workforce enriches me personally and encourages me to work harder."

One hundred twenty seven (77.44%) respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "Multi-culturalism and diversity are assets for organization's strategic survival and competitiveness in a globalized economy. "One hundred twenty seven (77.44%) respon-dents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement: "To be competitive globally, our organization must attract employees from a broader range of backgrounds and skills. "The majority of respondents in this study demonstratedpositive perceptions of multiculturalism and diversity in the workforce which is corroborated by other researchers. Griffin (2006) argues that the organizations that learn to manage multiculturalism and diversity generally have higher levels of productivity and suggests that such organizations are generally more creative and innovative than other organizations. Moreover, similar findings were reported by Zizek (2009) in a study of labor diversity in European Union organizations. The author concluded that personal development contributes signifi-cantly to the success of employee diversity management providing competitive advantages to organizations in the sphere of social responsibility, cost management, acqui-rement of funds, marketing, creativity,problem solving, innovations, and flexibility".Higgs et al. (2005) in their study found a clear relationship between team diversity and performance indicating that organizations can benefit when managers consider the composition of a team. This suggests that diversity offers great opportunities as well as challenges as managers must weigh diversity factors when creating teams and assigning projects.

One hundred seven (65.24%) respondents strongly dis-agreed or disagreed with the statement: "My organization has no barriers due to cultural differences among employees (e.g., promotion, team assignment, work relationships, communication)."One hundred forty seven (89.63%) respondents strongly agreed or agreed respectively with the statement "An involvement and inclusive organization culture is important for managing workplace diversity." One hundred thirty six (82.93%) respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "I believe multiculturalism and diversity should be a major part of an organizational culture."One hundred twenty nine (78.63%) respondents strongly agreed or agreed to the statement "I believe multiculturalism and diversity are good and lead to workforce harmony. "These findings are not surprising given the many challenges managers encounter with diversity and multicultural

issues. Many researches attribute barriers to the organization's culture as Taylor et al (2008) suggest that organizational culture and human resource management affect employee commitment directly as well as indirectly through top management team orientations. Therefore, anorganizational culture characterized by high adaptability and an HRM system characterized by high performance work practices have significant and direct effect on employee commitment. Additionally, Wenting (2004) found that lack of understanding the value of diversity; competing agendas, size, and complexity of the corporation; and economic changes were barriers most likely to hinder the success of diversity initiatives in MNCs.

Employees' opinions regarding the relationship between multiculturalism and productivity

One hundred thirteen (68.90%) respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "Having a diverse and multicultural workforce leads to increased employee and organizational productivity and overall success. "Ninety-six (58.55%) respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement:"My organization's compensation plan ensures equity among employees because we believe that employee satisfaction results in more productivity. "One hundred forty-five(88.50%) of respondents strongly agreed or agreed withthe statement: "An organization's commitment to diversity and multi-culturalism is necessary for enhancing its public image and attracting more business opportunities."One hundred thirty-four (81.70%) respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "Recruiting employees from diverse backgrounds boasts moral, motivates, and increases job satisfaction resulting in increased productivity. "One hundred forty-three (87.19%) respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "A multicultural and diverse workforce enriches me personally and increased my productivity."One hundred fifty-five (94.51%) respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement: "An organizational culture that promotes multi-cultural diversity inspires workplace performance and overall employee productivity." Most researches on the relationship between multicultural diversity and productivity is focused on team work and the evidence generally suggests more positive relations.

Empirical evidence regarding the impact of labor diversity on productivity is very inconclusive, however some studies have highlighted the important role of diversity in increased employee productivity. Hamilton et al. (2004) analyzed weekly data from a Californian garment manufacturing plant for the years 1995-1997 and found that teams with greater diversity in workers' abilities and composed of only one ethnicity are more

productive. Gupta (2008) argues that despite some complexities inherent in multicultural teams, such groups do indeed offer companies distinct advantages. This position is confirmed by Adler (2008) who states that because teams are often composed of different backgrounds; members of multinational teams have the capacity to list down more ideas, alternatives and finally solution. As a result they often think of other options and have different approaches to solving problems. Therefore, diversity in multicultural teams has the capability of bringing better results with more creative solutions (Gupta 2008). Other scholars contend that diversity ensures that the team will have the adequate mix of skills, knowledge, expertise and experience to be more productive than non-heterogeneous ones ((Parrotta et al., 2012, Brook, 2006).

Employees' perceptions of benefits (or non-benefits) of multiculturalism and diversity in the workplace

One hundred thirteen (68.90%) respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement: "My organization has a work environment that is free from discrimination so employees can concentrate on improving performance."One hundred twenty-one (73.78%) respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement: "My organization promotes a management style that accepts and appreciates the unique differences in people to ensure organizational success."One hundred eight (65.85%) respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement: "My organization believes that changing recruitment policies to reflect a diverse and multicultural workforce leads to increased talent and employee efficiency". One hundred forty- seven (89.63%) respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement: "An organizational culture that encourages diversity, employee involvement, and creates a sense of ownership and responsibility is important for the management of a successful, diverse, and happy workplace."Tables 5 and 6 present a summary of the analysis of correlations and means and standard deviations respectively.

Though many organizations seek to hire people of diverse backgrounds in order to increase the quality of decision-making and creativity, some strong cultures often seek to minimize diversity thus missing out on the benefits derived from having a diverse workforce. It is essential that organizations and managers strive to balance the need for diversity with the need for a strong culture. Stevens et al (2008) argue that if workforce diversity is approached in a way that maximizes inclusion and minimizes resistance it can present organizations with opportunities to create change that fosters the positive humanpotential of their employees. In affirmation,

Brief (2008) emphasizes that diversity has important implications for promoting positive organizational change through its facilitation of both individual and organizational performance. Other studies found that in anall-inclusive, diverse and multicultural environment, organizations create work environments in which employees feel safe (and are encouraged) to innovate and interaction isfacilitated(Dutton and Ragins, 2006; Gittell et al., 2006). The benefits can translate in employees' satisfaction, higher levels of physical and psychological well-being, and financial strength (Cameron and Caza, 2004).

Analysis and Discussion

Hypotheses Testing

This study also developed hypotheses and selected an acceptable level of risk (statistical significance) that are tested and summarised in this section. Based on the review of the literature, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. Younger employees' perceptions of multiculturalism and diversity are different from those of older employees. H_O: There is no significant relationship between age and perceptions of multiculturalism and diversity. The standard deviation for age was somewhat larger (1.174), than for personal enrichment and encouragement (.758). The analysisconfirmed that "There is no significant relationship between age and perceptions of multi-culturalism and diversity" is significantly correlated (P = .000) is less than the significant level< 0.01>. This means that age is not a significant variable in determining the perceived outcomes of a diverse workforce. Managers of MNCs should consider age of employees when designing multicultural and diversity programs to ensure that employees of all ages view them positively.

2. Employees of MNCs see no relationship between multiculturalism/diversity and productivity and organizational culture and productivity.H_O: There is no significant relationship between multiculturalism/diversity and productivity and organizational culture and productivity.

The mean for "Organizational culture and productivity" was lower at 1.91, compared to 2.00 for "Employee and organizational productivity." The standard deviation for "Organizational culture and productivity" was somewhat smaller (.977), than for "Employee and organizational productivity" (.997). The results from the data analysis confirmed that "There is no significant relationship between multiculturalism/diversity and productivity. Organizational culture and productivity" is significantly correlated (P = .000) and is less than the significant level

<0.01>. Therefore, it can be established that the relationship between multiculturalism/diversity and pro-ductivity and organizational culture and productivity is somewhat strong and positive. It is an indication that a multicultural and diverse workforce is more productive. This also confirms the findings of a study by Wentling (2004).

3. MNC employees believe there are some benefits of working in a multicultural and diverse workforce. H_O: There are no significant benefits of working in a multicultural and diverse workforce.

The mean for "Management style" was higher at 2.41, compared to 2.31 for "Recruitment policies towards diversity and multiculturalism." The standard deviation for "Management style" was somewhat smaller (1.073), than for "Recruitment policies towards diversity and multiculturalism" (1.211). "Recruitment policies …. and "… no significant benefits of working in a multicultural and diverse workforce" is significantly correlated (P = .000) and is also less than the significant level <0.01>. There-fore, survey respondents view management style and recruitment policies towards diversity and multiculturalism in their organization as beneficial to employees and employer. Building on these findings MNCs can develop and implement meaningful diversity programs that enhance employee diversity in their organizations. A similar finding also was confirmed in a study by Wentling (2004).

Cross-tabulation using chi square analysis (X^2)

Using the cross-tabulation Pearson Chi-Square test(X^2) with the acceptable level of statistical significance assumed to be 0.05, the researcher tested the hypothesis: H_o: There is no relationship between gender and em-ployees' perception of workplace harmony.

The results of Gender and workplace harmony crossta-bulation conclude that "There is no relationship between gender and employees'perception of workplace harmony" (sig. = 0.002). Since gender is insignificant in workplace harmony, managers need to focus on other variables when designing programs to promote harmony in their organizations.

Applying the correlation method, this researcher tested the hypothesis:

H_0: There is no relationship between "gender" of res-pondents and "Recruiting employees from diverse backgrounds boasts moral, motivates, and increasesjob satisfaction resulting in increased productivity."After conducting analysis on Gender and employee diversity

and productivity cross tabulation, the Pearson Chi-Square test showedthere is no relationship between "gender"of respondents and "Recruiting employees from diverse backgrounds boasts moral, motivates, and increasesjob satisfaction resulting in increased productivity". However, the significance of .071 for the analysis of "Gender and Recruiting employees from diverse backgrounds boasts moral, motivates, and increasesjob satisfaction resulting in increased productivity" shows managers that a gendered diversity recruiting policy is a positive approach.

Regression Analysis

The regression of "Ethnicity"and "Recruiting employees from diverse backgrounds boasts morale, motivates, and increases job satisfaction resulting in increased productivity"was significant at 0.000 level; the r^2 was .035. The r^2 of .035 suggests that MNCs should focus on ensuring that employees are satisfied with experiences that lead them to positively view "My organisation believes that changing recruitment policies to reflect a diverse and multicultural workforce leads to increased talent and employee efficiency."The F-ratio is 6.857 but still very strong (.010).While the t value of 13.798 is significant at 0.000 level indicating a positive relationship between "ethnicity" and employees' perceptions of "My organisation believes that changing recruitment policies to reflect a diverse and multicultural workforce leads to increased talent and employee efficiency."

DISCUSSION

1. The first objective of this study was to understand the employees' perceptions of multiculturalism and diversity with the research question: "Do employees of MNCs perceive their organisation's policies on multicultural diversity positively?" The hypothesis: "There is no significant relationship between age and perceptions of multiculturalism and diversity" was tested. Hypothesis test and cross tabulation using chi square were performed and revealed that "There is no significant relationship between age and perceptions of multiculturalism and diversity" is significantly correlated (P = .000). It is also less than the significant level < 0.01> (This means H_0 is rejected).The Pearson Chi-Square test confirmed that" There is no significant relationship between HRM practices of MNCs and multiculturalism and diversity." is significantly correlated (P = .000) is less than the significant level <0.01>. This means H_0 is rejected. Tables 1 and 2 in the Appendix present a summary of the analysis of correlations and means and standard deviations respectively.

Additionally, more than 88 percent of the respondents believed an organization's commitment to diversity and multiculturalism is necessary for enhancing its public image and attracting more business opportunities. About 90 percent of the respondents believed that an involve-ment and inclusive organisation culture is important for managing workplace diversity. However, about 35 percent of study participants indicated that grouping employees into races/cultures and incompatibility of culture/race were the worst aspects about working with an MNC.

2. The second objective sought to analyse employees' opinions of the relationship between multiculturalism and productivityand the research question: "Is there a relationship between multicultural diversity and employee productivity and organisational competitiveness?

The hypothesis: "There is no significant relationship between multiculturalism/diversity and productivity and organizational culture and productivity" was tested. Hypothesis test and cross tabulation using chi square were performed. Findings from thehypothesis test revealed that "There is no significant relationship between multiculturalism/diversity and productivity and organizational culture and productivity" is significantly correlated (P = .000) is less than the significant level <0.01>. This means H_0 is rejected. Cross tabulation results revealed that a significant correlation(P = .000) is less than the significant level <0.01>. This means H_0 is rejected. See Tables 3 and 4 in the Appendix for a summary of the analysis of correlations and means and standard deviations respectively. More than 85 percent of respondents expressed that a multicultural and diverse workforce "enriches me personally and increased my productivity." Moreover, one hundred and thirty nine (77.50 %) respondents affirmed that a multicultural and diverse workforce enriches them personally and "encourages me to work harder." The strong connection between multicultural diversity and productivity is an important statement to management of MNCs. Theories emphasizing the positive and negative effects of diversity and multiculturalism on productivity in organizations present mixed results though many argue that the benefits are more. One argument is that workplace diver-sity improves performance because of the likelihood of having the information needed to approach problems (Lazear, 1998), provide more creative ideas and solutions than non-diverse groups, have employees with in-depth knowledge of customer needs ((Thomas and Ely, 1996), and teams with more heterogeneous worker abilities are more productive though holding the distribution of team ability constant, teams with greater diversity in age are less productive (Hamilton et al. 2004).

3. The third objective was to identify perceptions of benefits (or non-benefits) of multiculturalism and diversity

in the workplace and the research question "Are employees of a MNC that values multiculturalism and diversity more comfortable and view it as increasing organizational morale?"The respondents ranked "globalised feeling/positive image of the organisation (34.76%) as the best reason for working in a MNC followed by "teamwork/different problem solving views" (29.88%) followed by increased productivity/enlarged talent pool (26.83%) respectively.

The hypothesis: MNC employees believe there are no benefits of working in a multicultural and diverse workforce was tested. The benefits of working in an MNC were used as a measure of employees' perceptions of values attributed to multiculturalism and diversity that increased organizational morale. Thus a hypothesis to ascertain the benefits of working in an MNC was tested. Findings from hypothesis test revealed that "There are no significant benefits of working in a multicultural and diverse workforce" is significantly correlated (P = .000) is less than the significant level <0.01>. The following findings' summaries address objective three of the study: One hundred thirteen (about 70.0%) ofthe respondents respectively strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement: "My Company has a work environment that is free from discrimination so employees can concentrate on improving performance."

While roughly 90 percent of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that an organizational culture that encourages diversity, employee involvement, and creates a sense of ownership and responsibility is important for the management of a successful, diverse, and happy workplace, a similar number (89.6 %) of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that an organizational culture that encourages diversity, employee involvement, and creates a sense of ownership and responsibility is important for the management of a successful, diverse, and happy workplace.

Conclusion/Recommendations

This study revealed insightful information that can guide managers of MNCs in embracing and dealing with a wide range of multicultural and diversity issues in the workplace. The findings indicate that employees' perspectives of organizational policies and implementation of these are essential for success. Diversity offers many opportunities for recruitment of new and fresh talents that contribute to increased productivity of employees. Moreover, the findings also confirm that organizations with positive corporate cultures are effective in promoting a highly skilled multicultural workforce (McMillan, 2010). Therefore strategically planning for a multicultural and diverse workforce is a task that HR departments should engage

in at all levels of the organization. An organization that does not have such a plan is perhaps perceived as neglecting or not recognizing the value of multicultural and diversity initiatives (Arredondo, 1996). Having and implementing such a plan creates awareness among employees, stake- and shareholders that the organization values multiculturalism and diversity and takes them seriously.

The findings indicate that there is a significant relationship between age and perceptions of multiculturalism and diversity based on results fromhypothesis test and cross tabulation using chi square. It appears that older employees also had longer years of experience, and thus have had experiences over the years with employees from different cultures. These findings inform that managers of MNCs need to adopt a proactive approach to addressing multiculturalism and diversity since it is clear from employees' perspectives that they value it and see benefits for the company.

The hypothesis test concluded that there is a relationship between multiculturalism and productivity. These findings resonate with the outcomes in this present study sending a message to MNCs and mangers regarding the calculated appropriateness of a diverse organization. Employees' perceptions can translate into positive outcomes when managers view them positively, engage employees, and implement policies reflective of these insights.

Multiculturalism and diversity can benefit both employees and management as discovered in this study. These revelations suggest that HR managers and organizational leaders who make decisions regarding multicultural and diversity practices should be aware of the specificities of programs that enhance a strong culture of corporate diversity and build on them to foster a positive link between employees' contributions and organizational productivity and growth.

The regression analysis provided a strong relationship between employees' perceptions of a multicultural and diverse workforce and individual and organisational productivity, a sign that MNCs should take seriously to enable their corporations to succeed globally. This suggests that MNCs should adopt a multicultural and diversity policy that ensures an organizational "fit" that promotes, accommodates, and values a workforce that reflects this mixture.

Though the study indicates positive employees' perceptions of diversity and multiculturalism in the workplace, Singapore is unique in that the nation state exemplifies these attributes in her society. However, Singapore houses many MNCs not home to the country.Also, about 60 per cent of participants in this study had previous working experience with an MNC thus sensitising them to multicultural/diversity issues. Implementing diversity

programs in other settings without exposure to cultural differences may face challenges but it is the definitive commitment of the management that brings success in the long run. Diversity programs can be effective if they are adapted to the local geographic operational environmental characteristics.

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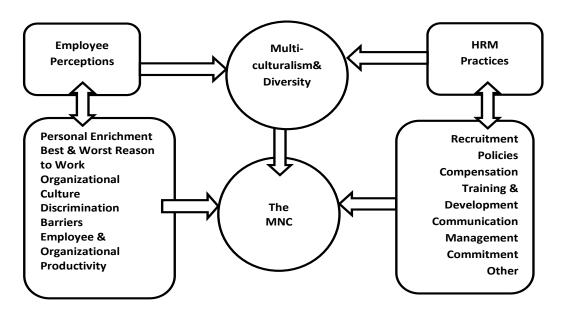
Appendix

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Table 1. Correlations between Age of Employees and Perception of Multiculturalism/Diversity.

		Age	Personal Enrichment	Workplace Harmony	Competition Assets	Involvement Org.	Attract Workers	No Barriers	Org. Culture
Age		1	.474(**)	.350(**)	.223(**)	.362(**)	.258(**)	-.105	.375(**)
			.000	.000	.004	.000	.001	.180	.000
	N	164	164	164	164	164	164	164	164
Personal Enrichment		.474(**)	1	.762(**)	.646(**)	.798(**)	.629(**)	-.135	.581(**)
		.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.084	.000
	N	164	164	164	164	164	164	164	164
Workplace Harmony		.350(**)	.762(**)	1	.572(**)	.808(**)	.605(**)	-.278(**)	.596(**)
		.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	164	164	164	164	164	164	164	164
Competition Assets		.223(**)	.646(**)	.572(**)	1	.883(**)	.847(**)	-.187(*)	.781(**)
		.004	.000	.000		.000	.000	.017	.000
	N	164	164	164	164	164	164	164	164
Involvement Org.		.362(**)	.798(**)	.808(**)	.883(**)	1	.817(**)	-.282(**)	.827(**)
		.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	164	164	164	164	164	164	164	164
Attract workers		.258(**)	.629(**)	.605(**)	.847(**)	.817(**)	1	-.266(**)	.764(**)
		.001	.000	.000	.000	.000		.001	.000
	N	164	164	164	164	164	164	164	164

Table 1. Contd.

No Barriers		-.105	-.135	-.278(**)	-.187(*)	-.282(**)	-.266(**)	1	-.353(**)
		.180	.084	.000	.017	.000	.001		.000
	N	164	164	164	164	164	164	164	164
Org. Culture		.375(**)	.581(**)	.596(**)	.781(**)	.827(**)	.764(**)	-.353(**)	1
		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	164	164	164	164	164	164	164	164

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Gender	1.35	.480	164
Personal enrichment	1.74	.758	164
Workplace harmony	1.97	1.047	164
Competition/Assets	1.79	1.065	164
Involvement Organization	1.75	.955	164
Attract workers	1.88	1.155	164
No barriers	3.02	1.030	164
Organizational Culture	1.74	1.166	164

Table 3. Correlations between Employees' Opinions of the Relationship between Multiculturalism and Productivity.

		Gender	Increased Productivity	Compensation Equity & Satisfaction	Image & more Business	Boasts moral, motivate, & increasejob satisfaction	Personal Enrichment	Inspire work performance
Gender		1	.218(**)	-.241(**)	.009	-.175(*)	-.033	.043
			.005	.002	.909	.025	.677	.582
	N	164	164	164	164	164	164	164
Increased Productivity		.218(**)	1	.576(**)	.734(**)	.711(**)	.744(**)	.863(**)
		.005		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	164	164	164	164	164	164	164
Compensation Equity & Satisfaction		-.241(**)	.576(**)	1	.607(**)	.564(**)	.525(**)	.606(**)
		.002	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	164	164	164	164	164	164	164
Image & more Business		.009	.734(**)	.607(**)	1	.741(**)	.778(**)	.699(**)
		.909	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	164	164	164	164	164	164	164
Boasts moral, motivate, & increasejob satisfaction		-.175(*)	.711(**)	.564(**)	.741(**)	1	.842(**)	.728(**)
		.025	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	164	164	164	164	164	164	164

Table 3. Contd.

Personal Enrichment		-.033	.744(**)	.525(**)	.778(**)	.842(**)	1	.747(**)
		.677	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	164	164	164	164	164	164	164
Inspire work performance		.043	.863(**)	.606(**)	.699(**)	.728(**)	.747(**)	1
		.582	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	164	164	164	164	164	164	164

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4. Mean and Standard Deviation.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Gender	1.35	.480	164
Increased Productivity	2.00	.997	164
Compensation Equity & Satisfaction	2.37	1.249	164
Image & more Business	1.78	1.039	164
Boasts moral, motivate, & increasejob satisfaction	1.83	.883	164
Personal Enrichment	1.83	.819	164
Inspire work performance	1.91	.977	164

Table 5. Correlations of Perceptions of Benefits (or Non-benefits) of Multiculturalism and Diversity in the Workplace.

		Gender	No Discrimination	Management Appreciation	Diversity focused Recruitment	Pay Equity	Organizational Culture
Gender		1	-.154(*)	-.108	-.085	-.251(**)	-.098
			.048	.169	.280	.001	.211
	N	164	164	164	164	164	164
No Discrimination		-.154(*)	1	.823(**)	.579(**)	.760(**)	.519(**)
		.048		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	164	164	164	164	164	164
Management Appreciation		-.108	.823(**)	1	.707(**)	.674(**)	.667(**)
		.169	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	164	164	164	164	164	164
Diversity focused Recruitment		-.085	.579(**)	.707(**)	1	.640(**)	.635(**)
		.280	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	164	164	164	164	164	164
Pay Equity		-.251(**)	.760(**)	.674(**)	.640(**)	1	.417(**)
		.001	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	164	164	164	164	164	164
Organizational Culture		-.098	.519(**)	.667(**)	.635(**)	.417(**)	1
		.211	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	164	164	164	164	164	164

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6. Mean and Standard Deviation.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Gender	1.35	.480	164
No Discrimination	2.41	1.218	164
Management appreciation	2.41	1.073	164
Diversity focused Recruitment	2.31	1.211	164
Pay equity	2.53	1.416	164
Organizational Culture	1.71	1.045	164