



## THE MODERATING ROLE OF ETHNIC IDENTITY ON PERSONALITY AND PERCEIVED DIVERSITY CLIMATE AMONG EMPLOYEES IN ORGANISATION

P.C.Gita

Assistant Professor, Kristu Jayanti College, Bangalore.

### Abstract

Due to globalisation, organisations are compelled to seek manpower from anywhere in the world which ensures profitability and excellence in whatever business they do. Due to this reason, the human resources of the organisations are becoming more and more diverse. A company, to manage this diverse workforce is churning out strategies to keep the employees happy and grounded within the organisation. This study tries to analyse the perception of diversity climate by the employees from an individual's perspective. Each Employee is unique, and hence his perception differs. This study analyses the influence of an individual's personality – five factor model of personality (FFM) on perceived diversity climate of employees in organisation and also the moderating role played by ethnic identity. Data is collected among employees across various sectors in Chennai to understand their perceived diversity climate.

**Keywords** *perceived diversity climate, diversity management, personality, five factor model of personality ( FFM), Big five, ethnic identity, ethnic identity search, affirmation, belonging and commitment*

The world being a global village, People are compelled to get along with others who are different. In several organisations, workforce diversity is emerging to be a major problem. The need of the hour for today's organisations is to recognise and manage workforce diversity effectively (Triandris, 2003)

Diversity in workplace today is not only based on age, gender and race. It also includes racial minorities, ethnic minorities, persons with physical challenges, Person of non-traditional sexual orientation, language and other groups. It can also include characteristics such as geographical habitation, parental status and marital status and other groups. Definition of diversity is varied and depends on the context and type of organisation in which it is related to.

### Perceived diversity climate

Employees in the organisations are individualistic and unique and form perceptions on various policies and programs of the organisation. The perception formed by the employees on the organisation's diversity programs and policies (diversity climate) constitutes perceived diversity climate. Organizations are made up of individuals of different belief and values which affect their perception and acceptance of the diversity policies (Hurlic, 2009) which forms perceived diversity climate. Perceived diversity climate is used as the dependent variable of my study

### Personality

The Five-Factor Model of personality (FFM) is a dimension of understanding human personality (Costa & McCrae 1985; Goldberg, 1990). The Five-Factor Model of personality, synthesizes the infinite number of personality attributes into five specific dimensions that provide researchers a framework for describing behaviour (Saucier & Goldberg, 1996). Personality is used as the independent variable of the study

### Ethnic identity

It is defined as the degree to which individuals perceive themselves to be included and aligned with an ethnic group (Smith & Silva 2011). This construct may be operationalised as a self-reported extent of ethnic identity as identified by the respondents (employees) of the research study. It refers to the way an individual identifies himself or herself based on his ethnic or racial origin. Ethnic identity is used as the independent variable in this study.

### Statement of the problem

Diversity at workplace is an accepted entity and organisations at all levels are designing and implementing policies and strategies to manage the ever-diverse workforce. One major issue that the organisation needs to understand is that organizations are made up of individuals that hold beliefs, values and perspectives that influence their perceptions and acceptance of the organization's diversity programs and policies. To facilitate a corporate environment that supports diversity programs organisations should focus on individual and his ability to reconcile his individual factors with organisational programs and policies. By examining the impact of five factor model of personality as precursor of individual perception, it enables organisation to identify specific factors contributing to perception of diversity climate in organisations. This study also tries to understand if ethnic identity mostly seen as a demographic variable has any impact on the above relationship

### Scope of the study

Over the last decade organisations have extensively introduced diversity programs and policies to promote a more open and accessible environment for individuals. This study takes the first step in understanding five factors of personality and ethnic



identity that contribute to the way individuals perceive diversity climate in organizations. By examining individual dimensions of personality and ethnic identity characteristic on perceived diversity climate, it is hoped that a more comprehensive approach to diversity management will be discovered. The study will be useful to Human resource managers, Top management, organisational counsellors and employees.

### Objectives of the study

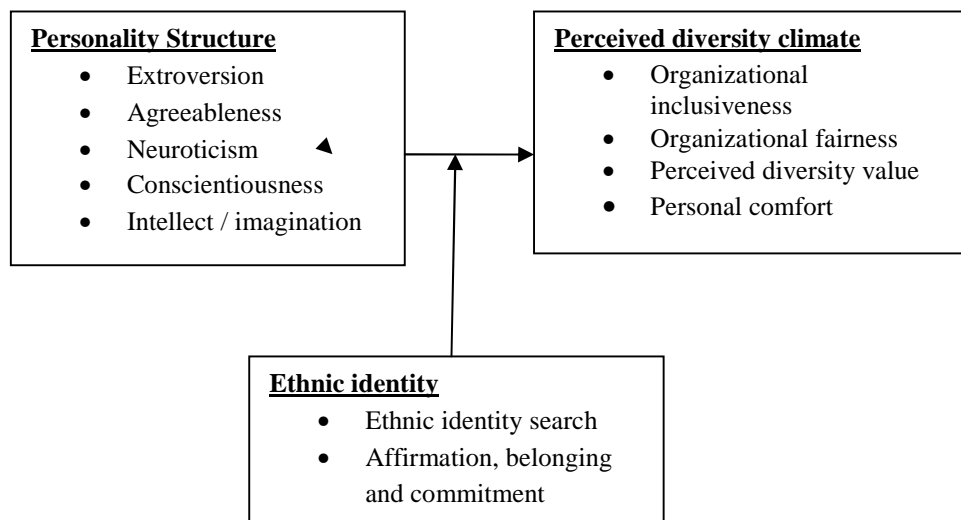
The aim of this research study is to assess the influence of five factor model of personality on perceived diversity climate and the moderating role of ethnic identity on the above relationship among employees in Chennai, India. Various objectives of this research study are as follows:

1. To assess the relationship between five factor model of personality and perceived diversity climate and its dimensions among the respondents of the research study.
2. To understand the moderating role of ethnic identity on the relationship between personality and perceived diversity climate

### Conceptual model of the research study

This research study seeks to find out the influence of ethnic identity on perceived diversity climate among employees in Chennai, India. The conceptual model of this research study is presented below in Fig 1.1. The perceived diversity construct has 4 dimensions as per Diversity Perception Scale (DPS) developed by Barak, Cherin and Berkman (1998) such as organizational fairness, organizational inclusiveness, personal comfort and personal diversity value. Ethnic identity construct has 2 dimensions such as Ethnic identity search, affirmation, belonging and commitment. Ethnic identity is measured using the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) developed by Phinney (1999) to measure the process of ethnic identity development in adolescents and in adults.

**Fig 1.1: Conceptual model of the research study**



### Review of Literature

#### Conceptual perspectives of perceived diversity climate

Research suggests that to improve organizational performance and inclusiveness, organizational diversity culture must change as workforce becomes more diverse (McKay et al. 2007, 2008). Diversity climate can be created by practices, procedures and rewards in the organization (Schneider, Gunnarson, Niles-Jolly, 1994) and it can be evaluated in three dimensions, namely, in terms of individual, group and organizational factors (Cox, 1993)

(Mor Barak et al. 1998) defines Diversity climate as “employee behaviours and attitudes that are grounded in perceptions of the organizational context related to women and minorities.”. Cox’s model (1993) of the diversity climate recognizes the interplay between the individual and the organizational situation in which the individual is embedded in an organisational context. Dimensions of the diversity climate include diversity in the employee work force, extent to which diverse input is valued in decision making, hiring, and promoting employees regardless of their ethnicity, providing feedback fairly without consideration of an employee’s ethnicity, provision of assignments based on skills and abilities of employees, and elimination of discrimination and bias (Cox 1993; Mor Barak et al. 1998). Their review of organizational and psychological climate,



pointed out that psychological climate perceptions “assess the significance and meaning of work environments to individuals” in terms of how beneficial or detrimental the conditions are to the employee whereas organizational climate refers to commonly shared individual perceptions of the work environment.

(Mor Barak et al. 1998) proposed that individuals develop perceptions about the organization’s stance on diversity as well as their own views pertaining to the value of diversity in firms. Previous evidence indicates that diversity climate perceptions vary based on one’s racial group membership (Kossek & Zonia, 1993).

Diversity climate perceptions affect employees’ work outcomes including organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Hicks-Clarke and Iles 2000). According to (Cox’s 1994) theoretical interactional model of cultural diversity (IMCD), diversity climate impacts organizational effectiveness both directly and through its effects on individual level outcomes. Diversity Climate influences affective reactions, such as how employees feel about their job and employer, and includes variables such as job/career satisfaction, job involvement, organizational identification and organisational commitment. In response to this change in demography, public and private entities alike have realized that to remain competitive it is a business imperative to develop and foster an inclusive environment, known as a diversity climate. A positive diversity climate is one, which embraces different ideas and perspectives, practices fairness and equity in organizational policies and procedures and values (Schneider, Gunnarson, & Niles-Jolly, 1994), and utilizes unique knowledge and experience (Cox, 1993; Hicks-Clarke & Iles, 2000; Kossek & Zonia, 1993; McKay, et al, 2007).

Diverse workforce is important component of any organizational climate of any organization. In other words, it can influence the organizational climate to a major extent. As studies indicate in Indian context, perception about organizational climate is significantly related with employee satisfaction (Aileni and Prasad 1995). It can be clearly assumed that diversity climate, being an important component of overall climate, will have significant bearing towards employee satisfaction.

### **Conceptual perspectives of Personality**

In addition to valuing diversity, there has been a growing interest in personality and personality-related concepts in the workplace (Judge & Bono, 2001). The decade of the 1990s saw increase in studies relating to personality and workplace outcomes, the use of personality as a selection tool in diverse settings cross-culturally (Robertson & Kinder, 1993) and for expatriate selection purposes (Ones & Viswesvaran, 1999). Chen and Hooijberg (2000) argue that diversity research should include personality variables. The increased interest in understanding the personality of employees in organisations and the organisation’s increased value and importance for diversity provides a vital reason for the study to be undertaken.

Five factor model of personality has emerged as one of the best tools to define the salient aspects of personality functioning and has been consistent across cultures. The factor agreeableness has a positive impact on their attitude towards diversity and positive relationship towards others. They are more flexible and tolerant towards others. Agreeableness was found to be positively associated with job related dimensions such as Organisational citizenship behaviour, job attitudes and job involvement. Conscientiousness trait is more predictive of job performance. Extroversion is related to leading change in others, organisational commitment, job satisfaction, job competencies etc. Openness to ideas is directly related to support for innovation in organisation.

### **Conceptual perspectives of Ethnic identity**

Ethnic identity is a dynamic, multidimensional construct that refers to one’s identity, or sense of self as a member of an ethnic group (Phinney, 2001). The way individuals form ethnic Identity has become an accepted method of identifying moderators that influence an individual’s perception of other groups. Many authors (Phinney, 1996; Ponterotto, Gretchen, Utsey, Stracuzzi, & Saya, 2003; Roberts, 1999) have examined the way ethnic identity is formed and its impact on individual identity. Phinney (1996) examined the way ethnic or racial identity forms in an individual through a process of exploring and questioning pre-existing attitudes about race and searching past and present experiences to help the individual gain a level of awareness that could lead to a positive perception of their own ethnic identity. This positive perception of ones’ own ethnic identity is vital to the acceptance of self that translates into possible acceptance of other groups.

Increasing levels of ethnic diversity within many organisations increases the need for a more sophisticated understanding of the role of ethnicity in the workplace. Previous scholars on ethnicity in organisations has considered ethnicity simply as a demographic variable (Cox and Nkomo 1990; Kenny and Briner, 2007; Nkomo, 1992; Robertson and Block, 2001). Such approaches ignore the key distinction between an individual belonging to versus identifying with a social identity category (Cox and Nkomo, 1990; Verkuyten, 2005). Researchers have therefore called for more studies that recognise the role of ethnic or racial identity in how ethnicity plays out and is actually experienced within the workplace (Cox and Nkomo, 1990; Kenny and Briner, 2007; Robertson and Block, 2001).



Understanding ethnic identity and how that identity is shaped by exposure to other individuals could influence the self-awareness and empathy elements of emotional intelligence and have an impact on that individual's perception of diversity climate.

### **Research Gap**

Diversity and issues relating to diversity has been gaining importance only in the last two decades. The review shows that there are very minimal research studies using perceived diversity climate as a variable and the few are the studies undertaken in the last decade. Review indicates that perceived diversity climate has been studied as an independent variable in relation to its implications in the workplace such as team performance, job satisfaction, organisational commitment etc. Individuals make up the organisations and their personal dimensions play a major part in their perception and behaviour. In this context there are few or very few studies not only in India but also in the other parts of the world which have dealt with the personal or individual antecedents of perceived diversity climate. Hence, this research gap justifies the purpose of the research study which would bring out the relationship between five factor model (FFM) of personality, emotional intelligence and ethnic identity on perceived diversity climate of employees at workplace in Chennai and Bangalore, India

Reviews dealing with the role of ethnic identity on perceived diversity climate are very few and there is a paucity of studies which have dealt with the role played by ethnic identity at workplace in the Indian context. This Research gap is addressed in the current study which would bring out the moderating role played by ethnic identity on perceived diversity climate among the respondents of the research study.

### **Methodology**

Descriptive and analytical research method was adopted for the study. Three sectors were chosen such as IT/ITES, Service sector and manufacturing sector and then a survey was conducted in Chennai using a questionnaire as the survey instrument. The researcher used both descriptive and analytical research methods in the survey. The questionnaire was checked for reliability and validity by experts and practitioners.

### **Sampling size and design**

The researcher has chosen employees as the subject from organisations of various sectors located in Chennai City. Judgement sampling Method is used in the study to select the sample. The researcher considered three sectors such as IT/ITES, Manufacturing and service sector. 525 completed questionnaires are used for the present study.

### **Hypothesis of the study**

H1: There is a significant influence of personality on employees perceived diversity climate

H2: There is a significant influence of ethnic identity on perceived diversity climate

H3: Ethnic identity plays a moderating role on the relationship between personality and perceived diversity climate on employees in organisation

### **Measures used for the study**

#### **Perceived diversity climate**

The Diversity Perceptions Scale (DPS: Barak et al., 1998) was used to assess perceptions of diversity climate. It includes 16-items representing four distinct factors such as organisational fairness, organisational inclusion, perceived diversity value and personal comfort.

#### **Five factor model of personality**

The *Mini-IPIP* is a 20-item short form of the 50-item International Personality Item Pool—Five-Factor Model measure (Goldberg, 1999), was developed and validated across five studies by (Donnellan, M.B, Oswald F.L, Baird, B.M, and Lucas, R. E. 2006).

#### **Ethnic identity**

It is measured using the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) developed by Phinney (1999) to measure the process of ethnic identity development in adolescents and in adults. The construct ethnic identity search has 5 items and the construct Affirmation, belonging and commitment has 7 items. The questionnaire comprises both optional type and Statements in Likert's 5 point scale (Strongly disagree to strongly agree) with three sections: perceived diversity climate, ethnic identity and personal details.

### **Data Analysis**

#### **Type of Industry**

The samples of respondents were drawn from 3 sectors to get an overall perspective of the entire workforce namely IT/ ITES, Manufacturing and service sector. The sample from IT/ ITES sector comprised of 38.7%, Manufacturing sector 26.1% and



service sector comprising of health, banking and insurance industry comprising of 35.2%. Overall the sample were more or less equally distributed among the working population of the population

**Table 1: Confirmatory factor analysis of the variable**

Factors	GFI	AGFI	CFI	NFI	ECVI	RMSEA	(p)	<sup>2</sup> /d.f
<b>PDC</b>	<b>0.941</b>	<b>0.906</b>	<b>0.887</b>	<b>0.845</b>	<b>0.61</b>	<b>0.063</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>3.085</b>
<b>PER (FFM)</b>	0.937	0.914	0.922	0.873	0.6	0.05	0.000	2.3
<b>ETHID</b>	0.946	0.894	0.950	0.938	0.49	0.08	0.000	4.5

#### Confirmatory factor analysis of Perceived diversity climate

The Chi - square ratio pertaining to Perceived Diversity Climate is 3.085 and it is within the suggested cut - off value of 1.000 - 5.000 and is statistically significant at 0.001level of significance.

#### Confirmatory factor analysis of Personality

The Chi - square ratio pertaining to personality is 2.3 and it is within the suggested cut - off value of 1.000 - 5.000 and is statistically significant at 0.001level of significance.

#### Confirmatory factor analysis of Ethnic identity

The ratio of Chi - square to degree of freedom pertaining to ethnic identity is 4.5 and it is within the suggested cut - off value of 1.000 - 5.000 and is statistically significant at 0.001 level of significance.

Goodness of fit indices of perceived diversity climate and ethnic identity is within the suggested cut - off values. It indicates that perceived diversity climate and emotional Intelligence construct shows good fit to the sample data. Hence, multi - dimensionality of perceived diversity climate and ethnic identity construct is proved pertaining to sample data of this research study.

**Table 2: Reliability analysis of the variables and its dimensions**

S.No.	Variables	Cronbach alpha coefficient value
1.	Perceived Diversity Climate a) Organisational Fairness b) Organisational inclusion c) Personal Diversity value d) Personal Comfort with diversity	0.840 0.750 0.704 0.738 0.743
2.	Personality a) Extroversion b) Agreeableness c) Neuroticism d) Conscientiousness e) Intellect / Imagination	0.828 0.767 0.703 0.713 0.799 0.782
3.	Ethnic Identity a) Ethnic Identity Search b) Affirmation, Belonging and commitment	0.906 0.786 0.882

In this study all constructs indicated a satisfactory internal consistency and one item from the perceived diversity construct was deleted to improve the alpha score from 0.73 to.84. Cronbach alpha coefficient value of all the variables and its dimensions are above the acceptable value of 0.700 as suggested by George and Mallery (2003).

#### Correlation of personality and its dimensions with respect to Perceived diversity climate and its dimensions

H1 There is a significant relationship between personality and its dimensions with respect to perceived diversity climate and its dimensions among the respondents of the research study.





**Table 3. Results of correlation of personality and ethnic identity with respect to perceived diversity climate and its dimensions among the respondents of the research study**

Variables	Perceived diversity climate	Organizational fairness	Organizational inclusion	Perceived diversity value	Personal comfort
Personality	$r = 0.266^{**}$ $p = 0.000$	$r = 0.156^{**}$ $p = 0.000$	$r = 0.223^{**}$ $p = 0.000$	$r = 0.270^{**}$ $p = 0.000$	$r = 0.074$ $p = 0.091$
Ethnic identity	0.406***	0.094*	0.237***	0.127**	0.853***

\*\* Significant at 1% level ( $p < 0.010$ )

From the table it is inferred that personality has no relationship with personal comfort with diversity a dimension of perceived diversity climate. Also it is found that personality has a positive relationship with all other dimensions of perceived diversity climate such as organizational fairness, Organisational inclusion, perceived diversity value and personal comfort with diversity at 1% level of significance

It is also inferred that ethnic identity has a positive influence on perceived diversity climate and all its dimensions such as organisational fairness, organisational inclusion, perceived diversity value and personal comfort at 5% level of significance

#### Regression

**Assumptions:** The data in the research has to be checked against assumptions before interpreting the statistical analysis for normality, homoscedasticity, independence of errors and collinearity. The assumptions are applied to both independent and dependent variable and to the relationships as a whole.

**Normality:** Normality is checked by examining the frequency distribution of the observed variables, the skewness, kurtosis and P-Plots which satisfied the required criteria. Normality is also confirmed by the Shapiro wilks test where the  $P > 0.05$  which indicated normality of data.

**Homoscedasticity (Constant variance):** The residuals were evenly distributed and randomly scattered around 0 supporting the homoscedasticity assumption of the study variable.

**Independence of Errors:** Independence of error terms is examined using Durbin Watson's coefficient. If the value is in-between 1.5 to 2.5, it indicates that data are independent of error terms and our results are within the prescribed limits.

**Collinearity:** Collinearity also called multicollinearity, is based on the assumption that the independent variables are uncorrelated (Keith 2006). In our analysis, Tolerance value, Variance inflation factor and condition index is within the above prescribed limits indicating the absence of multicollinearity.

**Table 4: Moderated regression analysis of Ethnic identity on the relationship of personality on Perceived diversity climate**

Model	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	F Value	B	S.E.		t - value	TOL	VIF
Constant	.177	.174	56.237***	2.611	.076		34.158***		
PER				.105	.037	.202	2.818**	.307	3.261
ETHID				.135	.041	.238	3.315**	.307	3.261
Constant	.177	.173	37.456***	2.662	.187		14.263***		
PER				.086	.072	.166	1.199	.082	12.183
ETHID				.117	.072	.206	1.635	.099	10.093
PER_ETH				.006	.020	.065	.301	.034	29.755

Note: \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ,  $n=525$ , Bootstrap samples =1000



The effect of moderating variable on the relationship of five factor model of personality on perceived diversity climate reveals that ethnic identity does not play a moderating role in this relationship. In Hierarchical regression model, in the first block the independent variable, personality along with the variable ethnic identity was added and tested for regression. In the second block the moderator variable per\_eth was included and tested. The result shows that when moderator variable is added, the values of personality ( $B=0.086$ ,  $\beta = 0.166$ ,  $P>.05$ ), ethnic identity ( $B=0.117$ ,  $\beta = 0.206$ ,  $P >.05$ ) and per\_eth ( $B=0.006$ ,  $\beta = 0.065$ ,  $P>.05$ ), was not significant. The tolerance and Variance influence factors were not within the limits. The confidence interval for the dimensions includes zero.

Hence it is inferred that ethnic identity does not play a moderating role on the relationship between five factor model of personality and perceived diversity climate. Hence hypothesis H3 was not supported.

### Suggestions

The human resource team should attract the right kind of people with a good emotional intelligence and personality traits as per the requirements of the organization. Tests on personality and emotional intelligence should be a part of the screening process Continuous monitoring of the employees must be undertaken and based on the results training program must be planned.

The top management must lead the activities related to diversity issues from the front to build trust among the diverse workforce Organizational policy and strategies related to diversity should be made transparent and grievance redressal mechanism be made aware to all employees.

### Conclusion

This study brings to light the effect of an individual's personality on their perception especially on sensitive issues of organisation such as diversity and its climate. Organisations and the HR team should take note of this impact and utilise the personality of individuals in organisations for their mutual benefit. It should also understand employee's personality to provide training needs accordingly and recruit the right kind of employees by testing their personality and the organisation's needs.

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