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Article

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Linking Workforce Diversity and Contextual Performance: The Mediating Role of Interpersonal Conflict and Moderating Role of Supportive Leadership

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Abstract

Despite increased recognition, South Asian organizations' interest in workforce diversity and its role in enhancing performance in a public environment remains limited. Interpersonal conflict has been a dilemma in collectivist and high power distant culture due to differences among supervisor and subordinate opinions, attributable to workforce diversity. Present study is an attempt to understand the relationship between workforce diversity and contextual performance keeping in view the mediating role of interpersonal conflict and moderating role of supportive leadership. The model is studied on primary data of 440 civil servants drawn through proportionate stratified sampling technique. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses are performed before model testing to establish variable construct validity. For model and hypotheses testing, structural equation modeling by using AMOS, and hierarchical regression analysis, by using SPSS is performed. The findings show a partial mediation of interpersonal conflict between workforce diversity and contextual performance. Moreover, moderating role of supportive leadership for workforce diversity and contextual performance in presence of interpersonal conflict is also found. The index of moderated mediation also supported the presence of moderated mediation. The paper reaffirms the social identity theory literature from Pakistan within South Asian region.

Key Words: workforce diversity, attitudes towards diversity, diversity perception, diversity climate, contextual performance, interpersonal conflict, supportive leadership, civil services, Pakistan.

1. Introduction

Diversity is becoming increasingly important as people with diverse backgrounds and skill sets can add value to an organization. By keeping their identities, the diverse values, ethics, interests, physical and emotional characteristics present within the organizational environment are recognized. In this way, diversity cultivates performance in an organizational setting. Nonetheless, it is a new idea. However, its effect on contextual performance in Pakistan requires further investigation.

Last three decades have witnessed a global shift in governance, technology and management (Patil et al., 2021). This shift is evident in transition from highly mechanistic to organic work environments and from production-oriented to performance-oriented work processes system (Rawboon et al., 2021). Public sector worldwide has been focusing on public delivery work processes by benefitting from diverse workforce (Woods, 2020).

Organizational workforce composition has become more diverse. Diversity is an emergent concept and becoming increasingly important. Workforce diversity (WD) is essential for the performance of any organization, the fact that WD exerts a causal influence on organization competitiveness and efficiency is widely supported in extant literature (Holmes IV, Jiang, Avery, McKay, Oh, & Tillman, 2021; Jekelle, 2021). With the growing demand for a diverse workforce, effective interaction and conflict management among employees is also becoming increasingly important (Kim, & Lee, 2022)

Strong, transformational and supportive leaders can blend a diverse workforce in an efficient and productive way by understanding and taking care the needs and preferences of their followers (Kim et al., 2021) and minimizing conflicts among them (Haryanto et al., 2022).

In order to otherwise understand the direct influence of WD on CP (Vairavan & Zhang, 2020; Yadav & Lenka, 2020), Interpersonal Conflict (IC) has been taken as a mediating variable (Franke & Foerstl, 2020) and SL as a moderating variable (Alzoman, 2012; Kelemen et al., 2020; Lee, Legood et al., 2020).

The novelty of current study from previous researches is that it highlights the model emphasizing the mediated moderation among workforce diversity and the contextual performance relationship studied in the public sector, particularly in Pakistan's Civil Services.

It will fill gaps in the literature on WD, CP, IC, and SL in the context of South Asia (Pakistan). The studies portraying Western settings, the WD is considered to be good for performance by definition. The relationship is complex in Pakistan's bureaucratic contexts, as employees used to seek personal support from their immediate supervisors based on tight personal ties (Jabeen & Jadoon, 2017).

Many studies have identified the gaps that may be filled by investigating the associations of workforce diversity with other variables (McCandless et al., 2022; Post et al., 2021) most notably leadership styles (Haryanto et al., 2022; Tsai & Tsai, 2013), and contextual performance. Furthermore, Cho et al. (2017) studied the effects of diversity on performance qualitatively in the United States and recommended that the relationship be studied empirically in other sectors of Asian countries.

This research has proposed IC as a mediator and SL as moderator through which workforce diversity indirectly affects contextual performance as an important step in determining how workforce diversity leads to contextual performance.

Developed countries have adopted the concept of diversity within public services in order to promote fairness and equal employment opportunities; however, the same is still in early stages in the South Asian countries, notable Pakistan, and the systematic literature review Paul, Rathore, & Sial (2019) also endorse this understanding. Thus, the research problem will be to understand *“what is the relationship of workforce diversity and contextual performance in the presence of interpersonal conflict as mediating and supportive leadership as moderating variable in Civil Services.”*

The threefold research objectives of the current research are to investigate; 1) the current status of WD in Pakistan, 2) WD-CP Relationships in Pakistani Civil Services, (3) Mediating and Moderating Roles of IC and SL in WD-CP Relationships.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Workforce Diversity

The WD within an organization is required in today's competitive business environment. WD is conceptualized by researchers as consisting of visible and invisible attributes (Barak, 2016) such as age, gender, marital status in society, social status, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual tendencies, personality traits, cultural background (Yingjun et al., 2020) creative talent, learning style, academic background, creative thinking, problem solving, mental acumen and understanding capabilities (Yeager & Nafukho, 2012).

The literature suggests that in previous studies diversity has been studied as a unidirectional variable. Mostly, studies have been conducted considering demographic attributes or cognitive qualities (knowledge, skills, and abilities). There are very few researchers who studied a mix of attributes (Harrison et al., 2002; Jehn et al., 1999; Van Knippenberg et al., 2004; West et al., 2004). Thus, the current research focuses on perception of workforce diversity, its attributes and dimensions.

The literature review on diversity shows direct and indirect effects on performance, learning capacity, motivation, and organizational settings (Hur, 2013; Leslie, 2019). Moreover, conflict, turnover (Moon, 2018), contextual performance (Joshi et al., 2011), organizational citizenship behavior (Moon, 2016), job satisfaction (Vanderschuere & Birdsall, 2019), diversity climate (Oberfield, 2016) and workplace inclusion (Vanderschuere & Birdsall, 2019) are some of the outcome variables that have been studied in the WD literature.

2.2 Contextual Performance

Contextual performance (CP) refers to enriching, discretionary behaviors that support the psychological and social context in which employees perform various tasks (Aguinis, 2019) and increases effectiveness (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997).

The CP is the organizational context that supports technical work. Contextual performance behaviors are supportive actions in the social environment where daily task activities take place (Spitzmuller & Ilies, 2015).

According to Lievens, Conway, and De Corte (2008), job performance raters emphasized contextual over in-role performance. CP is also gaining attention in the service sector, such as hospitals and hotels. Contextual performance is being used by both public and private organizations to improve efficiency (Ebrahimpour et al., 2011).

2.3 Interpersonal Conflict

Conflict can be task, relationship, or process-based. Conflict can play a positive or negative role in the relationship between diversity and performance. Conflicts in organizations cause group divisions based on preferences (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which adversely impacts performance (Turner, 1987). Interpersonal conflicts are also known as socio-emotional conflicts.

Contrary groups or individuals act in ways that hinder or frustrate each other (Alper, Tjosvold, & Law, 2000). Similarly, in Central Superior Services CSS, the bureaucratic structure reveals higher officials' expectations and pressures on subordinates, causing conflict. As a result, the higher-ups are authoritarian, causing discontent among the lower-ranking officials.

2.4 Supportive Leadership

Supportive leadership acknowledges followers' needs. It removes tension and worry, inspires followers to innovate and create, and acknowledges their efforts. The SL boosts employee self-esteem and social satisfaction (House, 1996).

Discretionary behaviors are examined in the leadership paradigm and include spontaneous and innovative responses that benefit all parties involved at all levels of the organization. These behaviors also aid an organization achieve its aims. These impulsive and pioneering responses benefit leaders and followers while increasing the organization's ability to achieve goals (Ilies, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007). In a formal supervisor-subordinate relationship, followers cannot give rewards; therefore they demonstrate positive discretionary behaviors to reciprocate (Katz, 1964).

3. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

The present study focuses on roles of IC and SL on the relationship between WD and CP. The studied model is backed by social identity theory (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). According to identity theory, individuals in organizations perform in accordance with their identifications. Schneider and Northcraft (1999) discovered that people utilize demographic (gender or ethnicity) and functional (occupation or organizational position) characteristics to

categorize themselves and their peers. Social identities influence perceptions of merit and performance in organizations. In social relationships, Blau (1964) asserts that reciprocity is critical. When individuals are treated with respect and value, they reciprocate with regard and trust, forming an emotional tie.

People establish social groupings as a result of identification and social exchange, which results in conflict, values, and preferences. Social identities within a group reciprocate favors based on shared attitudes, ethnicity, and beliefs (Aharpour, 2022; Jakobsen & Petersen, 2022; Yasmeen et al., 2020). The increase in diversity in work groups leads to less self-segregation.

In today's global environment, we can apply social identity and social exchange theories to leadership studies as well (Steffens et al., 2021; Uhl-Bein, Maslyn, 2003). Associating with his followers in a group fosters mutual trust, respect, and obligation (Christensen et al., 2021).

3.1 Workforce Diversity and Contextual Performance

Diversity is now a prerequisite for responsiveness, transparency, representation, and efficiency (McGrandle, 2017; Williams, 2017). Diversity and social inclusion are linked to superior performance in businesses and governments (Barak, 2013; Lee, 2019). Adding more diversity to the organizations results in discretionary behaviors performed in form of contextual performance. We can find various studies on diversity and performance, but focusing on contextual performance will increase overall organizational performance.

The relationship between WD and CP have been studied (Bing, Davison, Minor, Novicevic, & Frink, 2011; Holmes IV, Jiang, Avery, McKay, Oh, & Tillman, 2021; Schneid, Isidor, & Kabst, 2015). Employees in organizations are diverse in age, gender, and ethnicity, and when managed effectively, they improve CP (Tamunomiebi & Onah, 2019). The discussion leads to hypothesis H₁.

- H₁: There is a positive influence of Workforce Diversity on Contextual Performance.

3.2 Workforce Diversity, Interpersonal Conflict and Contextual Performance

IC deals with how intensely individuals experience friction, behavior clashes, tensions, and emotional conflict with other individuals in organizations (Rohlen, 2021).

The WD has numerous advantages, such as the ability to attract talent and innovation while simultaneously grounding IC (Aldaibat et al., 2019; Fujimoto, Härtel, and Azmat, 2013), resulting in a competitive advantage for a business (Roh, Chun, Ryou, & Son, 2019). Many diversity theorists and researchers have asserted that the benefits of diversity management include organizational flexibility, effective environmental management, structural integration, and the decrease of conflict-related group dynamics (Nishii et al., 2018; Roh et al., 2019; Wei & Wu, 2013). Employees become part of some ingroups and some outgroups. Employees having same characteristics will form ingroups and hence interpersonal conflict is reduced having same opinions and point of views. The current study entails 12 occupational groups of civil servants, which are basically ingroups. This leads to second hypothesis.

- H₂: There is a negative influence of Workforce Diversity on Interpersonal Conflict.

The diverse behaviors, interests, ambitions and motives of employees in organizations can lead to conflicts. Conflict can cause both positive and negative emotions. Conflict has been shown to have more detrimental than good impacts (Böhm et al., 2020). IC causes aversion, anger, frustration, and discomfort, says Mukolwe (2014). Studies indicated IC to have a strong and negative impact on CP (Aniefiok et al., 2018; Carlson et al., 2008). This led to form the third hypothesis.

- H₃: There is a negative influence of Interpersonal Conflict on Contextual Performance.

Studies have found an association between diversity, conflict, and performance. Employees from diverse backgrounds perform better (Fulton, 2021). Diversity reduces IC, which increases performance. The effects of WD on performance have been studied using IC as a mediator (Amason, 1996; Jehn et al., 1999, Triana et al., 2021).

The researchers wanted to study these relationships in South Asian region, specifically in Pakistan. Members of a collective group like the civil services occupational group, members of diverse backgrounds are expected to work together and make decisions collectively. As a result of this interdependence and social interaction, there may be less conflict and dissolution among members. So the fourth hypothesis is:

- H₄: Interpersonal conflict mediates the relationship between Workforce Diversity and Contextual Performance.

3.3 Workforce Diversity, Supportive Leadership and Contextual Performance

Leadership is a critical element for improved organizational performance, and it is necessary to examine their relationship (Mor Barak et al., 2021; van Knippenberg, & van Ginkel, 2021). Numerous studies on leadership behaviors and gender and ethnic diversity, have been conducted (Feeney, & Camarena, 2021; Richard, Kirby, & Chadwick, 2013).

Organizations may value diversity and capitalize on it by employing a diverse workforce. Any organization's performance is determined by its leadership. When leadership is supportive and effective, it reduces IC and so results in contextual performance (Reilly, & Aronson, 2009). This results in the formulation of fifth hypothesis.

- H₅: Supportive Leadership moderates the relationship between Interpersonal Conflict and Contextual Performance .

A study of the literature on WD demonstrates that leadership plays a role in enhancing CP (Pradhan, & Pradhan, 2015). Transformational leaders go an extra mile in persuading and motivating their followers to engage in contextual performance behaviors that are not explicitly stated in job descriptions.

Effective and result-oriented policies require careful management of diversity. Leaders must enhance social awareness and keep their employees satisfied by reducing IC (Gardner et al., 2021).

Kim et al. (2021) and Saltson and Özgür (2015) investigated the role of SL as a moderator. Several studies have established a negative association between supervisory support and IC (Panda, Jain, & Nambudiri, 2021). Conflicts arising from diversity, if not addressed appropriately by leaders, have been shown to decrease performance (Jehn et al., 1999; Krajcsák, 2021). As a result, the following hypothesis is derived:

- H₆: There is moderation effect of supportive leadership on the indirect effect of workforce diversity on contextual performance through interpersonal conflict.

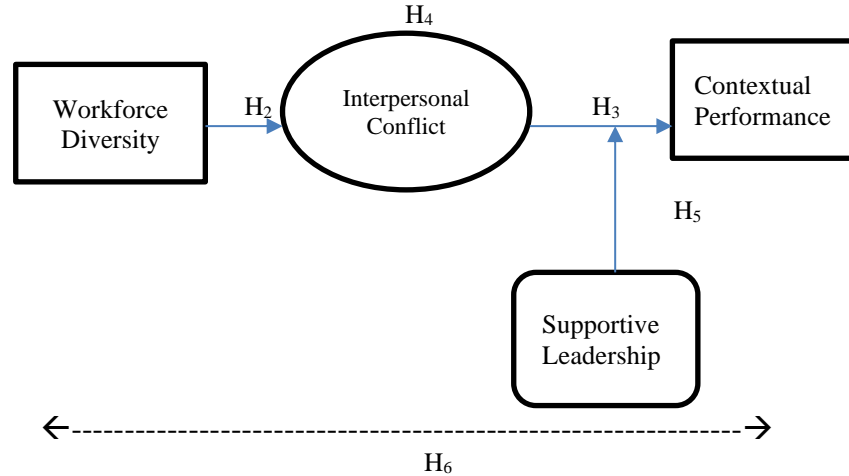


Figure 1: Schematic Diagram of the Study

4. Method

4.1 Population, Sample, and Procedure

The study population consisted of 6044 Pakistan Civil Servants of 12 occupational groups during 1980-2021. The study used a statistical, ex post facto, and cross-sectional research design. A proportionate stratified sample of 440 was drawn.

4.2 Instrumentation and Measures

A questionnaire consisting of adapted scales has been used to collect the data. The questionnaire was consisted of 42 statements measuring responses through a Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*.

The WD is measured through Attitudes towards diversity scale of Montrei, Adams, and Eggers (1996), Diversity Perception scale by Mor barak, Cherin, and Berkman (1998) and diversity climate scale by McKay, Avery and Morris (2008). The CP was measured through Van Scotter and Motowidlo's (1996) contextual performance scale. The IC is measured through Interpersonal conflict at work scale by Spector and Jex (1998). The SL is measured through people-oriented leader behaviors by Van Wart (2014) and one dimension of

transformational leadership by Modified Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire by Bass and Avolio (2000).

Table 1 Reliabilities and Intercorrelations among Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	SE	1	2	3	4
1. Workforce Diversity	3.8063	.76965	.0419	.937			
2. Contextual Performance	3.7974	.51543	.0280	.365**	.849		
3. Interpersonal Conflict	2.2923	.98683	.0537	-.251**	-.486**	.955	
4. Supportive Leadership	3.4883	.96419	.0525	.149**	.457**	-.634**	.953

Internal consistency reliabilities appear along the diagonal and bold
and ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 1 shows that all variables tested had Cronbach's $> .7$, as per Nunnally and Bernstein's (1994) criteria, are reliable and can be used for further data analysis. IC has significant ($p < .01$) and negative relationship with WD, CP and SL while WD has a positive and significant ($p < .01$) association with CP and SL. Whereas, SL has positive and significant ($p < .01$) correlation with WD and CP but negative relationship with IC.

Total of 440 questionnaires were handed out to the target sample. There were 380 valid questionnaires with response rate of 88 %, of which 249 (65.5 %) were male and 131 (34.4 %) were female. The occupational group DMG (Pakistan Administrative Service) had the most 42 (11%) and IG (Information Group) had the least 24 (6.3 %) responses. The majority of responses, 205 (53.9%), were from Grade 18 civil servants.

5. Data Analysis and Results

As the scales were formed by adapting items from different scales, the data was analyzed using multivariate techniques. First, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) were used to assess the scales' validity and reliability to ensure that underlying factors are associated with the measurement scales and are consistent too. Second, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique is used to test the hypothesized relationships. To test the measurement models, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed using AMOS v. 21. According to Collier (2020), a second-order CFA is also referred to as a higher-order construct that is measured by latent constructs. That is, a second-order CFA is a statistical method used by researchers to confirm that the theorized construct in the study is loaded into a specific number of underlying sub-dimensions or constructs. Thus, IC and SL are analyzed as first-order latent constructs. Whereas, the WD and CP are classified as second-order latent variables.

5.1. Measurement Fit, Validity and Reliability Analyses

The KMO and Bartlett sphericity tests of the EFA estimates were: WD (KMO = 0.943, Bartlett test = 0.000), CP (KMO = 0.882, Bartlett test = 0.000), IC (KMO = 0.869, Bartlett test = 0.000), and SL (KMO = 0.909, Bartlett test = 0.000). Keeping in view the guidelines devised by Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, and Tatham (2017), at KMO > 0.5 and sig of Bartlett test < .01, it is concluded that EFA pass the construct validity of the respective scales.

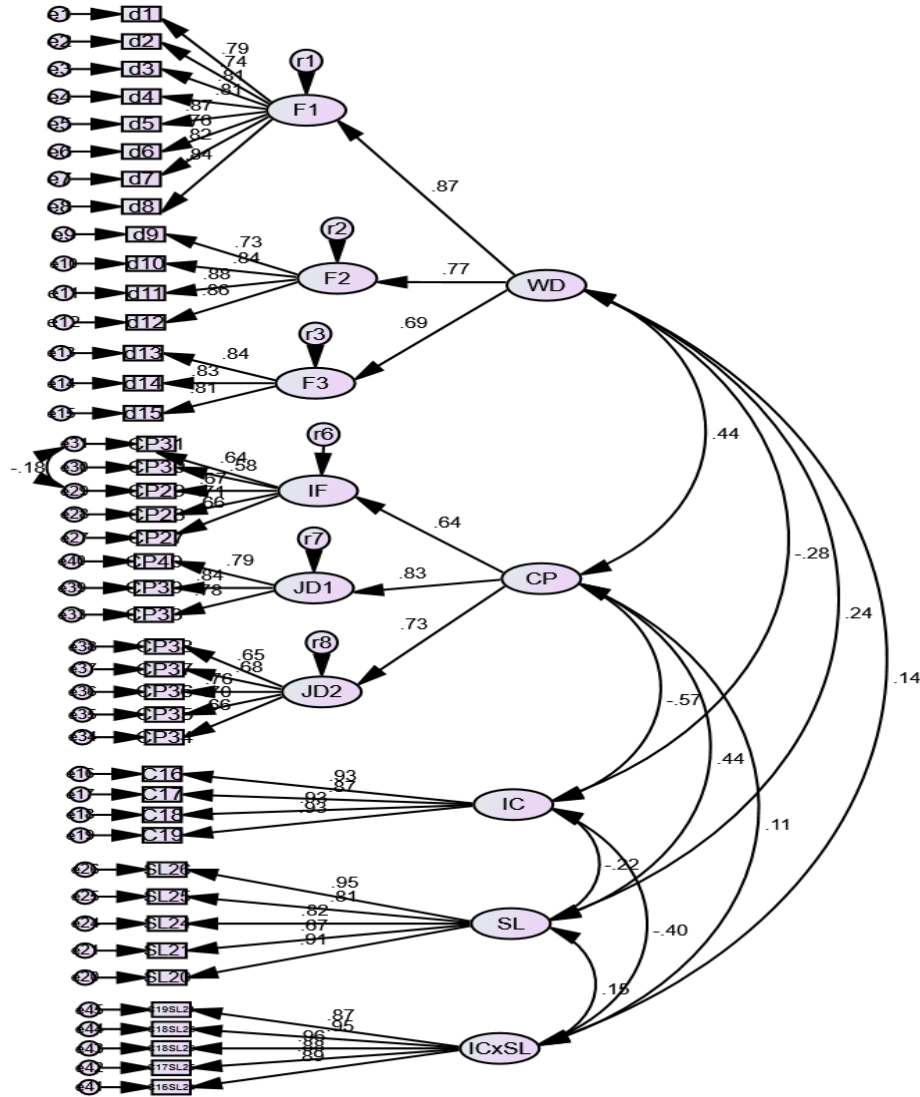


Figure 2: Workforce Diversity and Contextual Performance—Measurement Confirmatory Model

The measurement confirmatory and structural models are depicted in Figures 2. According to Hair et al. (2017), factor loadings greater than .5 are better at explaining unobserved constructs in the study. As a result, factor loadings for each item were determined after the variables were validated using CFA. As a result, six items were removed because their factor loadings were less than or equal to .5. Whereas, for the purpose of further improving the model, the covariance of the items was calculated.

The CFA model is estimated and found a good fit followed by SEM with a good fit as per the guidelines by Loehlin (2017). Model Chi-Square Test (CMIN/df.), Bentler-Bonett Normed Fit Index (NFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) were used to assess the model's overall goodness of fit, and all values were within their respective common acceptance levels (Schuberth et al., 2022). The four-factor model (Workforce Diversity, Interpersonal Conflict, Supportive Leadership and Contextual Performance) yielded good fit for data; CMIN/df = 1.610, NFI = 0.9, CFI = 0.956, SRMR = 0.05, and RMSEA < 0.05 and PCLOSE was 1. Whereas Hoelter was greater than 200 at .01 and .05, indicating the model fulfills the threshold (Hair et al., 2017). It signifies that all elements measured and related to the constructs researched.

The Standardized Factor Loading (SFL) ranges from 0.57 to 0.98, fulfilling the threshold 0.40 recommended by Whittaker and Schumacker (2022). Each of the measurement item's coefficient estimates was also significant at $p = 0.001$. So, the measuring model is valid and theoretically sound.

Table 2: Factor Wise Reliability and Construct Validity (Convergent and Discriminant) of the Scales

Variables	Cronbach Alpha	Items	Factor wise Reliability	Items	CR	AVE	CR-AVE
Workforce Diversity	0.937	15	Factor 1 (F1): 0.936	8	0.937	0.653	0.284
			Factor 2 (F2): 0.895	4	0.899	0.690	0.209
			Factor 3 (F3): 0.865	3	0.865	0.682	0.183
Contextual Performance	0.849	13	Factor 1 (IF): 0.779	5	0.777	0.486	0.291
			Factor 2 (JD1): 0.847	3	0.827	0.615	0.212
			Factor 3 (JD2): 0.814	5	0.802	0.515	0.287
Interpersonal Conflict	0.955	4			0.955	0.842	0.113
Supportive Leadership	0.953	5			0.953	0.805	0.148

Table 2 shows that Cronbach α and CR > 0.70 indicates scale reliability and construct validity (Cheung et al., 2023). Positive CR-AVE values confirmed the convergent validity. Validity is ensured by measuring discriminant validity (Rönkkö, & Cho, 2022). Each construct had a value below 0.90, indicating discriminant validity (Baharum et al., 2023).

Table 3: Reliability and Construct Validity (Discriminant and Convergent)

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	CP	WD	IC	SL	Int ICxSL
CP	0.781	0.601	0.315	0.815	0.740				
WD	0.820	0.606	0.185	0.853	0.430	0.779			
IC	0.955	0.842	0.508	0.959	-0.556	-0.208	0.917		
SL	0.954	0.807	0.433	0.975	0.561	0.161	-0.658	0.898	
Int ICxSL	0.960	0.827	0.160	0.968	0.113	0.143	-0.40	0.373	0.9.09

Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were used to assess convergent and discriminant validity. An AVE of 0.5 or greater is significant and shows acceptable convergent validity (Hair et al., 2017). To test discriminant validity, the AVE estimate for two factors should exceed the square of their correlation (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This means that the used scales are reliable for data gathering and analysis of the researched model.

5.2. Hypotheses Testing

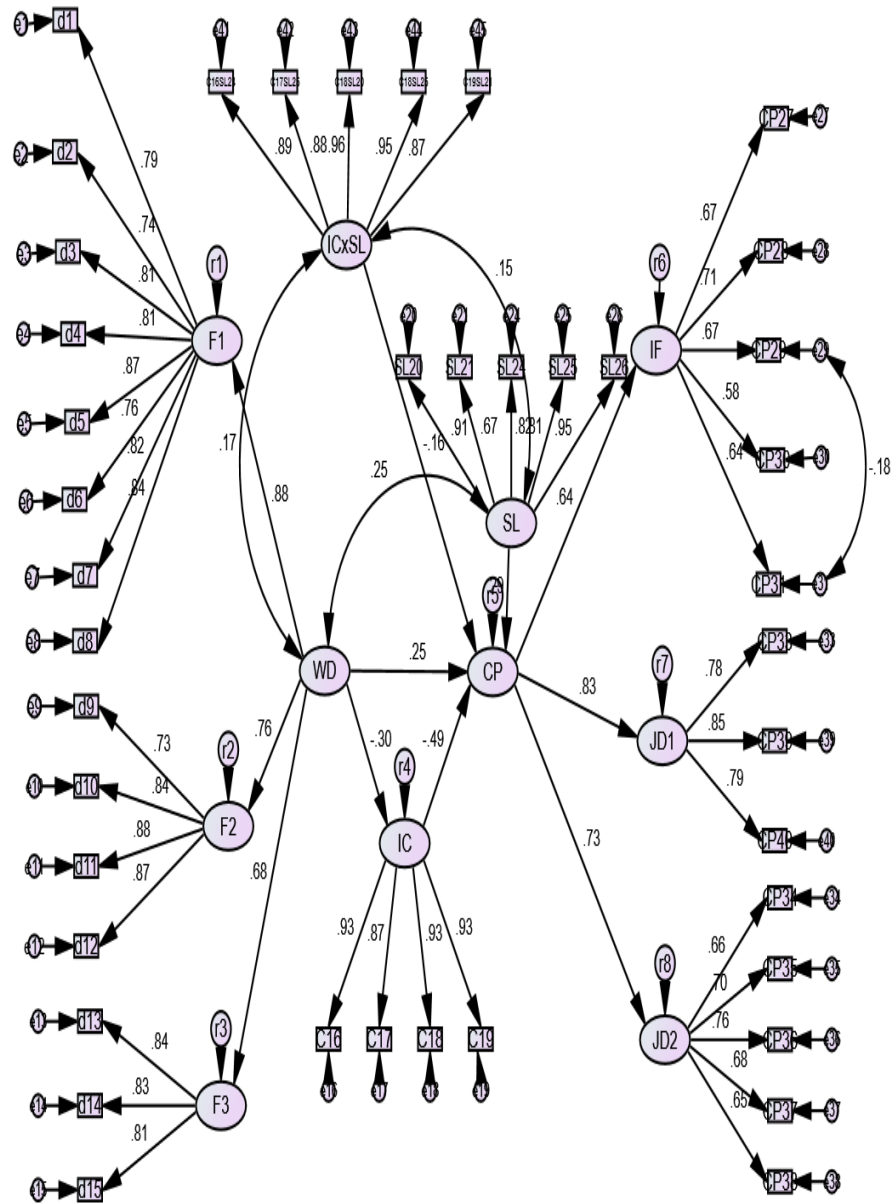


Figure 3: Workforce Diversity and Contextual Performance—Structural Model

By using SEM, the model was found to be acceptable at Chi-Square/DF = 1.826, NFI = 0.9, CFI = 0.941, RMSEA = .05, and P CLOSE was 0.564. The values for Hoelter at 0.01 and 0.05 were 207 and 200, respectively. H₁, H₂, H₃, H₄, were analyzed through SEM and related values are shown in Table 5 and are supported. A regression weight with a CR > 1.96 is significant at $p < .01$ (Byrne, 2001; Hair et al., 2017).

Table 4: Regression Weights of SEM Model - Interrelationships of Constructs

Independent variable	Path	Dependent variable	Standardized Estimate / Unstandardized Estimates	S.E.	C.R.	P	Decision
Workforce Diversity	----→	Contextual Performance	0.333/.206	0.050	4.116	***	Supported
Workforce Diversity	----→	Interpersonal Conflict	-0.314/-.524	0.108	-4.832	***	Supported
Interpersonal Conflict	----→	Contextual Performance	-0.297/-.110	0.025	-4.332	***	Supported
Supportive Leadership	----→	Contextual Performance	0.410/.149	0.028	5.306	***	Supported
Interaction of IC x SL	----→	Contextual Performance	-0.205/-.068	0.021	-3.178	***	Supported

Source: SEM text output, # Sig. level *** indicate P value less than 0.01

From Table 4, at $\beta = 0.333$, $p < 0.01$ and $CR = 4.116$ the H₁ is accepted. This implies that WD will increase CP. Thus, increased diversity has the potential to influence employee performance. Referring Table 4, at $\beta = -0.314$, $p < 0.01$ and $CR = -4.832$, H₂ is supported by the data. It indicates that WD in civil servants reduces IC. The data support H₃ at $\beta = -0.297$, $p < 0.01$ and $CR = -4.332$. The negative relationship between the variables indicates that when IC increases, CP decreases. SL has a direct effect on performance at $\beta = 0.410$, $p < 0.01$ and $CR = 5.306$. The interaction impact of SL as a moderating variable is negative at $\beta = -0.205$, $p < 0.01$ and $CR = -3.178$, hence significant. The CR is > 1.96 for a regression weight, which means path is significant at the 0.01 level or better.

Bootstrapping is used in AMOS software to test the mediation (indirect influence induced by interpersonal conflict). The bias-corrected confidence interval level for the 5000 bootstrapped sample was 95%. First, the direct WD effect on CP was determined. Then the direct effect of WD on CP with IC was measured. Mediation / no mediation were evaluated by the difference in significant level with and without direct effect. Table 5 presents the SEM results for H₄.

Table 5: Mediation Effect of Interpersonal Conflict on the Link Between Workforce Diversity and Contextual Performance

Hypothesis	Direct Value of Beta With No Mediator	Direct Value of Beta With The Mediator	P Value	Indirect Effect of Beta	P Value	Mediation Type Observed
Mediation As: H₄: WD-IC-CP	0.41***	0.33***	***	(-0.31)*(-0.30) 0.093	***	Moderate Mediation

** shows the significance level (P value < 0.01), *** shows the significance level (P value less than 0.001), WD = Workforce Diversity, IC = Interpersonal Conflict, CP = Contextual Performance

According to the test results in Table 5, WD directly affects civil servants' CP and indirectly affects CP via the IC. Keeping in view the guidelines given by Hayes (2022), as there is a significant relationship between IC and CP but also some direct relationship between WD and CP, the mediation is said to be a partial mediation.

Table 6: Hierarchical Regression for Parsimonious Model

	Model 1 (OV=IC)	Model 2 (OV=CP)	Model 3 (OV=CP)
R Square	.0628	.1289	.2953
MSE	0.9154	0.2382	0.1933
F	22.4509	49.5931	69.9784
P	.0000	.0000	.0000

Note: WD= Workforce Diversity, IC = Interpersonal Conflict, CP = Contextual Performance

The three models are studied under model 4 of Process Hayes MACRO of SPSS, delineated in Table 6. The Process Hayes Macro has been used to test the moderation effects on WD and CP. The model one shows WD as independent variable and IC as outcome variable. Model 2 is the influence of WD on CP. Model 3 is the WD as independent variable, CP as dependent variable and IC as mediating variable. CP varies by 13% ($F = 49.5931$, $p = .000$) due to workforce diversity. By the addition of mediating variable that is IC, there is variation of 29% ($F = 69.9784$, $p = .000$) in CP. Thus, model 3 is the parsimonious model.

5.3 Moderation Testing

To study the moderation and moderated mediation of the studied model, the Model 14 of Process Macro by Hayes have been incorporated. Its results are portrayed in Table 7.

Table 7: Conditional Indirect Effect of Workforce Diversity on Contextual Performance through Interpersonal Conflict with Supportive Leadership as Moderator (N = 380; Bootstrap Resamples = 5000, CI = 95%, Unstandardized coefficients)

Predictor	B	SE	R ²	P	95% SE
Mediator variable model (DV = IC)					
Workforce Diversity	-0.3213	0.0678	0.628	0.0000	-0.4547, -0.1879
Dependent variable model (DV = Contextual Performance)					
Workforce Diversity	0.1798	0.0306		0.0000	0.1197, 0.2400
Interpersonal Conflict	-0.1649	0.0310		0.0000	-0.2260, -0.1039
Supportive Leadership	0.1607	0.0307		0.0000	0.1003, 0.2211
INT_ICXSL	-0.0844	0.0193	0.3699	0.0000	-0.1224, -0.0465
Conditional direct effect at different values of the Moderator SL					
SL _{efflow} (-0.9732)	-0.0827	0.0329		0.0124	-0.1475, -0.0180
SL _{effmean} (0.0000)	-0.1649	0.0310		0.0000	-0.2260, -0.1039
SL _{effhigh} (0.9732)	-0.2471	0.0393		0.0000	-0.3245, -0.1697
Index of moderated mediation	0.0271	0.0117			0.0067, 0.0526

Note: WD = Workforce Diversity; IC = Interpersonal Conflict; SL = Supportive Leadership; BCa CI = adjusted bootstrap confidence intervals

Table 7 shows a significant WD-IC relationship ($p = 0.0000$, $b = -0.3213$). The direct relationship between IC and CP is statistically significant ($p = 0.0000$, $b = -0.1649$). Also, the relationship between IC and CP through SL is statistically significant at -1SD, mean and +1 SD. The relationship between IC and CP with interaction of SL is also statistically significant ($p = 0.0000$, $b = -0.0844$). The interaction effect is negative, so the more positive the SL, the more negative the IC influence on CP, or vice versa. The results backed up hypothesis 5 that SL moderates the relationship between IC and CP.

Hypothesis 6 relates to SL's moderating effect on WD's indirect effect on CP through IC. It is supported and moderated by IC as a mediating variable. The indirect WD-CP relationship is significant ($b = -0.1649$, $p = 0.0000$) in the presence of IC. SL was a significant moderating variable ($b = -0.0844$, $p = 0.0000$). No sign change in b value suggests weak moderation. In the presence of SL as a moderator the more positive the SL is, the more negative the indirect effect of WD on CP through IC becomes. The moderated mediation index was 0.0271 (CI 0.0067, 0.0526). Because the upper and lower confidence intervals do not include zeros, moderated mediation is present. SL accounts for 37% of variation in the R^2 square. The R^2 change is considerable at 0.369. It is also indicated by figure 4, due to moderating effect of SL for the relationship of IC and CP, the line shifts to upward with

more steeper as compare to the actual relationship. This led to the conclusion that SL as moderator makes IC and CP more responsive.

The current analysis provided evidence that workforce diversity has an indirect effect on contextual performance through interpersonal conflict, when supportive leadership is high which in turn leads to high contextual performance.

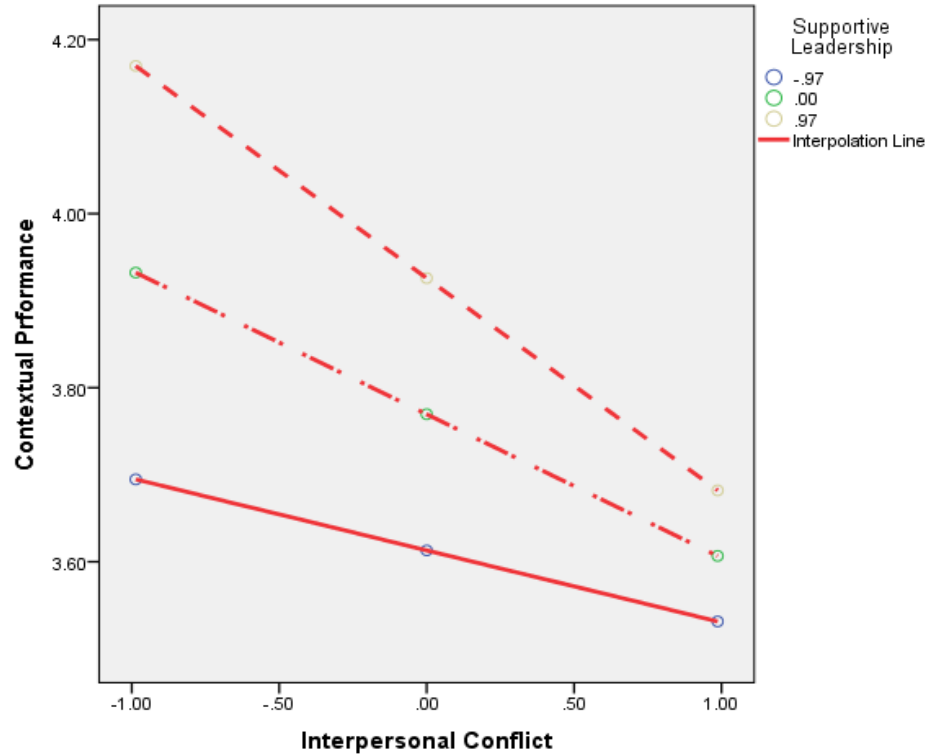


Figure 4: Moderating Effect of Supportive Leadership on Interpersonal Conflict and Contextual Performance

6. Discussion

The studied hypotheses are empirically and theoretically supported. The WD is present at surface level (gender, age, ethnicity, education level, occupational groups) as well as at a deep level (perceptions and attitudes towards minority groups and HRM practices, skills and competencies) in Civil Services of Pakistan. The H_1 found to be positive and significant and supported by the diversity and performance literature (Bing et al., 2011; Tamunomiebi & Onah, 2019). The second hypothesis, that WD reduces IC, is consistent with earlier research (Abugre, 2020; Roh et al., 2019). It contradicts previous literature narrating positive WD-IC relationship (Aldaibat et al., 2019; Fujimoto et al., 2013). Moreover, the Pakistani Civil Services has a diverse population in form of culture, gender, beliefs, etc.

Each occupational group has distinct tasks, norms, and roles that shape its members' behavior and attitudes, defining its identity and uniqueness. When there is group synergy, Interpersonal conflict is reduced since everyone works towards the same goal (Brasseur, 2020).

IC has a negative influence on CP (H₃). It is also supported by the researchers' findings and is consistent with earlier studies (Begüm, 2022; Min et al., 2020).

The mediating effect of IC on WD-CP relationship is consistent with research findings of Jehn et al., (2010). The following studies also support the relationship (Roberge & Van Dick, 2010; Triana et al., 2021; Um & Oh, 2021).

The H₅ is supported, indicating that SL moderates the link between IC and CP, with SL increasing the CP. Supportive supervisors reduce IC among individuals, groups, and teams, leading to extra role behaviors. The current finding is also empirically supported by the researchers (Wang et al., 2005).

When leadership is effective, it promotes WD and reduces IC, which results in improved CP (Jones & George, 2014; Waleed, Ahmad, Jan, Ali, Khattak, & Nadeem, 2021). H₆ is supported that WD has an indirect effect on CP through IC and is moderated by SL. The research findings emphasized the significance of diversity in determining employee performance. As a result, public officials and civil servants focus on the effective management of a diverse workforce. Additionally, diversity has become a performance requirement and is viewed as a critical component of the political and ethical framework for achieving representative bureaucracy.

Another research finding is that of IC would mediate the diversity and performance relationship in civil services. This suggests that as IC among civil servants decreases as a result of a diverse workforce, CP increases, hence enhancing task performance. As a result, IC's impact on organizational performance must be reduced. Facilitation can be accomplished through support functions, emotional support, meeting needs and preferences, and supportive leadership. Employees' performance suffers as a result of the conflict. Following past studies (Pelled, 1996), this study examines the role of contextual variables (mediating and moderating) in the relationship between diversity and contextual performance. The current study's impact on the literature and the South Asian public sector is enormous.

The current study's findings can be understood in the light of Hofstede's culture study. For collectivism and power distance, Pakistan scored moderate to high. It increases IC in organizations. The Pakistani Civil Services are categorized in a pyramidal structure with fewer officials at the top and more officers at the bottom (Islam, 2004).

In a collectivist society like Pakistan, the employment relationship is morally based rather than professional. In Pakistan, people are born into in-groups and are tightly attached to them. As a result, they reciprocate unwavering loyalty throughout their lives. Employees rely on their superiors passively. A collectivist-compliance tendency prevails among members, who blindly follow the family heads and clans. Similarly, moderate power

distance and high collectivism in Civil Services of Pakistan faces less IC, due to sharing of common interests in occupational groups.

6.1. Theoretical Contribution

This study has numerous theoretical ramifications. It adds to the body of knowledge on WD-CP relationship via IC and SL. The current study emphasis on WD (employee's attitudes and perceptions towards diversity) can lead to CP by managing IC. The current study focuses on the WD-CP relationship in mediated moderated association as most of the existing studies have studied these associations individually.

The study's findings add to the literature of Social Identity theory from the public sector context of Pakistan. It recommends SL to reduce public sector friction and promote WD-CP ties. It validates the Social Identity Theory, which states that people identify with others who share similar traits, influencing perceptions of organizational performance.

WD will help organizations to make smarter choices (Cox, 1993; Cox & Blake, 1991; Ely, 2004). Leadership in any organization governs its performance (Johnson, 2001). Effective leadership promotes workforce diversity and thus organizational performance (Thomas & Ely, 1996).

6.2. Practical Contribution

The findings highlight the significance of WD in Civil Services of Pakistan and its effect on the performance of civil servants. Through the use of interpersonal conflict and supportive leadership, this study demonstrated the importance of workforce diversity in increasing contextual performance. Thus, the management and leadership may strengthen their commitment by recognizing WD to improve CP and SL. Another significant finding is the role of IC in mediating WD and CP.

7. Conclusion

Diversity is about acknowledging, understanding, accepting, valuing, and celebrating employee differences. Organizations are becoming more diverse as a result of globalization and internationalization; they contain a varied range of individuals who form in- and out-groups. Conflict arises as a result of the categorizing of employees into various groups. Additionally, it results in poor decision-making, low performance and efficiency. The civil servants play a significant role in administration of the country by managing WD. When they depict high CP, they are expected to perform better in their main stream duties as well.

7.1 Limitations and Future Implications

The cross-sectional design has been used; in order to get the holistic picture a longitudinal study may be conducted. The current research variables are from Pakistan's Civil Services. Such interactions can be investigated in many other public and commercial areas like banking, health, communications, etc. to aid in decision making. To generalize the results, it is proposed that the same relationship be researched across organizations.

The research also looks at the entire civil service to assess the influence of WD on CP. It is recommended for future researches to do the analysis among various occupational

groups of civil services, to get a holistic picture. The current study is quantitative. More qualitative research is needed. It will also validate the variables' relationships. MPLUS could be used by future researchers to conduct group-wise analyses of civil service occupational groups. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews may be conducted in future studies to get an insight of respondents.

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