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Developing Entrepreneurial Ecosystem: A Case Study of Technopark, Thiruvananthapuram

Srirang K Jha[*] and Amiya Kumar Mohapatra[**]

ABSTRACT

Technopark in Thiruvananthapuram is one of the largest technological parks in the world. It was established by the Government of Kerala in 1990 as an autonomous organization to meet the infrastructure needs of emerging electronics and Information Technology industry. The Technopark has now expanded to accommodate more than 200 companies that employ a large portion of the IT workforce in Kerala. Besides, Technopark also helps the budding entrepreneurs through its state-of-the-art Technopark Technology Business Incubator (T-TBI) which provides economical plug and play facilities to start-ups in IT/ITeS sectors and support them throughout the gestation period. Characteristic features of Technopark contribute significantly toward developing an enabling ecosystem for the entrepreneurs within the campus. This article provides an insightful account of how the Technopark is changing the entrepreneurial landscape in Kerala and creating opportunities for the young to innovate, grow and become successful in all their ventures. True, Technopark is a success story of a

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government organization turning the tide towards entrepreneurship development in an unconventional manner.

Keywords: Technological Parks, Technopark, Start-ups, Entrepreneurship, Thiruvananthapuram, India

INTRODUCTION

Thiruvananthapuram is capital of Kerala –a southern province of India. The city has a unique topography comprising resting hills, flourishing groves, extensive coast lines, chaotic urban trails, and lively metropolitan suburbs. Also, it is the most populous city of Kerala. The city is well connected with the rest of India through railways, roads, waterways, and airways. Traditionally, people of the Thiruvananthapuram district were engaged in mineral processing, sugar milling, textiles, handicrafts, rice cultivation and coastal fishing[1]. However, today it has emerged as a hub of technology-driven industries thanks to an exciting entrepreneurial ecosystem triggered by Technopark. As a result, the city has become hothouse for burgeoning start-ups leading to huge job opportunities for the young and talented workforce drawn from across the country and other parts of the world. Diversity of workforce in the city has also enriched the socio-cultural milieu of Thiruvananthapuram for which significant credit must be assigned to Technopark.

Technopark was established by the Government of Kerala in 1990 as an autonomous organization to meet the infrastructure needs of emerging electronics and Information Technology industry even before India adopted the policy of liberalization, privatization, and globalization. It is registered under the Travancore-Cochin Literary, Scientific and Charitable Societies Registration Act, 1955. By 1995, first phase of Technopark was ready to welcome the entrepreneurs who were interested in setting up their factories or offices in a contemporary industrial campus with all the amenities under the sky. Facilities at the Technopark manifested its vision “to provide a holistic enabling environment to make knowledge industry intrinsically competitive and world class”. Further, the organization truly lived up to its lofty mission statement, “Planning, establishment and management of Electronics Technology Parks in Kerala so as to create the infrastructure and environment required for setting up software

development companies, high technology Electronics manufacturing units and Research Design, Development, Incubating and Training establishments".

In addition to the vision and mission, the quality policy of Technopark makes the organization distinct: "Provide viably, superior environment and services with assured quality of service to make technology businesses intrinsically competitive and successful and promote regional development through synergistic linkages between industry, government and academia, based on continuous improvement and innovation". No wonder, Technopark, Thiruvananthapuram has evolved over the years as one of the finest industrial hubs especially for the technology companies in the world. Interestingly, the Technopark campus which is the largest technological park in the country in terms of built-up area is also reputed as one of the "greenest technopolis"[2] in the world thanks to architectural designs imbued with principles of sustainability. Some of the top companies which have their offices in Technopark include Aegis Software, Allianz Cornhill, D+H, Envestnet, Ernst & Young, IBS Software, Infosys, Navigant, Oracle, QUEST, RR Donnelly, Speridian Technologies, Suntec Business Solutions, Tata Elxsi, TCS, Toonz Animation, and UST Global. The Technopark has now expanded to accommodate more than 200 companies that employ a large portion of the IT workforce in Kerala[3].

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF TECHNOPARK

Technopark provides a holistic and enabling ecosystem for the entrepreneurs as well as established corporations. Characteristic features of Technopark are as under[4]:

- **Most lively IT Campus in India:** Technopark has a sprawling campus that accommodates 63000 IT/ITeS professionals. It offers a rich and varied experience with several socio-cultural forums, events, and initiatives. The entire campus boasts of great synergy between employers and employees.
- **Most Customer Friendly IT Campus:** The Single Window Clearance Board (SWCB) ensures a hassle-free business set-up within the campus. All approvals for construction of buildings like building permits, electrical scheme approvals, fire and safety approvals, statutory approvals from Pollution Control Board among others are granted by SWCB within 30 days from the date of submission of application.
- **Stable Infrastructure:** Technopark provides 100% power back-up, uninterrupted power supply, and ambient air-conditioning for all buildings. There are two 110/11 kV

power substations within the campus. Water supply is maintained by Technopark through a dedicated distribution system. Even the support infrastructure at Technopark is great. There is a bustling suburb right outside the Technopark campus. Besides, there is a magnificent food court within the campus. Presence of all the essential commercial shops and establishments make the campus self-sufficient. There is a sprawling guest house within the campus to meet the needs of guests.

- **Green Environment:** The green buildings in the Technopark campus have boosted energy efficiency through much lower power consumption. Besides, there is Solid Waste Management Unit within the Technopark campus.
- **Responsive Maintenance Team:** The operations and maintenance carried out by Technopark guarantees 24X7 assistance to the stakeholders.
- **Safe and Protected Campus:** Technopark safeguards the interests of all the stakeholders with zero man-days lost in the companies' operations within the campus.
- **Excellent Data Connectivity:** Leased line in Fiber connectivity available in all the buildings on the campus guarantees seamless connectivity at lower cost.
- **Start-ups and Incubation support:** The Technopark Technology Business Incubator (T-TBI) provides economical plug and play facilities to start-ups in IT/ITeS sectors.
- **Lower operational costs:** Technopark ensures lower operations cost with a host of SEZ and Non-SEZ rental options.
- **Futuristic:** The hi-tech infrastructure of Technopark is quite futuristic. The brilliantly designed, fully air-conditioned conference halls, seminar and meeting halls are well equipped to meet all the business needs of the stakeholders.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Technopark has not only served its stakeholders in a meaningful way over the years but has also contributed towards job creation, capital accumulation and wealth maximization. However, the organization has a track record of always looking ahead in terms of enriching the experience of all the stakeholders within and outside the Technopark campus while continuously adding value. Sanjeev Nair, Chief Executive Officer, Technopark is taking keen interest in improvising campus amenities and creating new opportunities. An area where Technopark needs to focus is development of non-SEZ commercial and residential buildings[5].

The organization has already taken a few initiatives like organizing events to promote a culture of innovation on the campus. Technopark can further leverage its location and facilities to become a hub of tourism. It goes without saying that Technopark has emerged as a classic model for all the technological parks in India and other parts of the world. Yet, there is no end to excellence. Interestingly, leadership team of Technopark is already making futuristic strides towards further expanding the vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem within the campus.

Endnotes

[1] https://www.britannica.com/place/Thiruvananthapuram

[2] https://www.technopark.org/about-technopark

[3] Nidheesh M. K. (2023). How startups changed Thiruvananthapuram. Mint. https://www.livemint.com/companies/start-ups/how-startups-changed-thiruvananthapuram-11685559124579.html

[4] https://www.technopark.org/why-technopark

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Custard Apple Value Chain in Beed District of Maharashtra, India: A Case Study

Amit Kumar Singh[*] and Himanshu Kumar[**]

ABSTRACT

Agriculture, with its allied sectors, is the largest source of livelihoods in India where 70% of its rural households still depend primarily on agriculture for their livelihood, with 82 percent of farmers being small and marginal (FAO). The majority of small and marginal farmers as well as the landless peasants depend on the other livelihood activity such as livestock and non-timber forest products for sustenance in states like Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Maharashtra, etc. Some of the non-timber forest products are a catalyst for their income, and custard apple (also called *Sitafal*/*Sarifa* in some regions) is one of them. Many communities are involved in the cultivation of custard apple in different states. One such community called Banjara is significantly engaged in cultivating custard apples in Maharashtra's Beed district. In this paper, the readers can get a holistic view of the value chain of the custard apple. The case study demonstrates how a small tribal community-driven enterprise turns profitable by processing custard apples in the Beed district of Maharashtra. Taking cue from the case, the government can promote cultivation

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and processing of custard apples among the tribal community as an alternative means of livelihood and income augmentation.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Sustainability, Women's Empowerment, Beed, Maharashtra, India

INTRODUCTION

The custard apple is a drought-tolerant fruit plant. It can remain healthy even in worse atmospheric conditions. The plant does not need much water and pesticide too. In other words, custard apple needs less attention, low-maintenance cost, and low investment. It also includes a pleasant aroma and taste and is also a source of medical benefits in which it is used as an antioxidant anti-diabetic medicine. Further, the custard apple has good acceptability in various value-added products viz., juice, ice cream, toffee, milkshake, vinegar, Ready to serve the beverage, jam, and nectar etc. with 10 to 55% contribution. According to The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), yearly yield of custard apple in India was over 298 thousand tons in 2018.

Beed custard apple grown in the Balaghat ranges of the Beed district has a phenomenal, sweet taste. The high potassium content and micronutrients in the rocky terrain with shallow, gravelly, well-drained soil of Balaghat range around the Beed district, especially in Dharur, Ambajogai, Ashti is more prominently responsible for Dharur custard apple's unique and distinct taste. The yield of Beed custard apple is 10.89 Kg/Plant. The perfectly round shape, attractive shiny green external fruit colour with pleasant texture and flavour, and the distinct creamy white or yellowish colour with wide space appearing on maturity are the key features to identify the custard apple from Dharur. The Beed custard apple is heavy and produces a high quantity of pulp. The pulp is juicy, white creamy, granular, edible, soft and fleshy, with a mild flavour and slight acidity (0.24%) (Balaghat Sitaphal Sangh, 2016). Maharashtra leads the country in custard apple production, with 92,320 tons, followed by Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Custard apples are also grown in Assam, Bihar, Odisha and Rajasthan.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design	Quantitative Research
Sampling Technique	Random Sampling
Sampling Frame	Custard Apple Selling women
Sample Size	40
Primary Data Collection Technique	Survey, FGD
Data Collection Tools	Questionnaire
Secondary Data	Published document from the Internet
Visualization Tools	Excel

FINDINGS

The flow diagram (Figure 1) provides an understanding of how the custard apple pulp is processed.

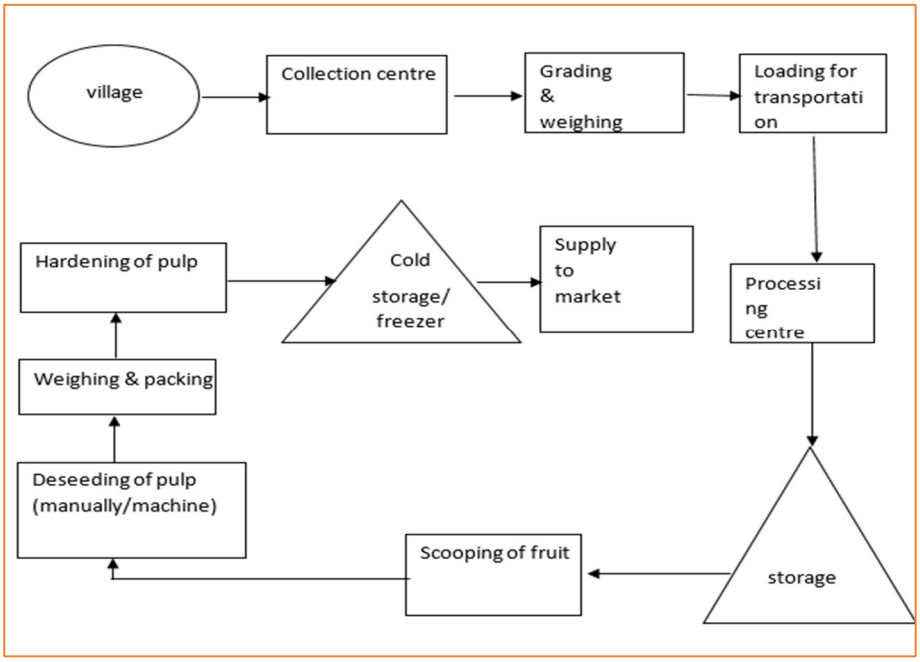


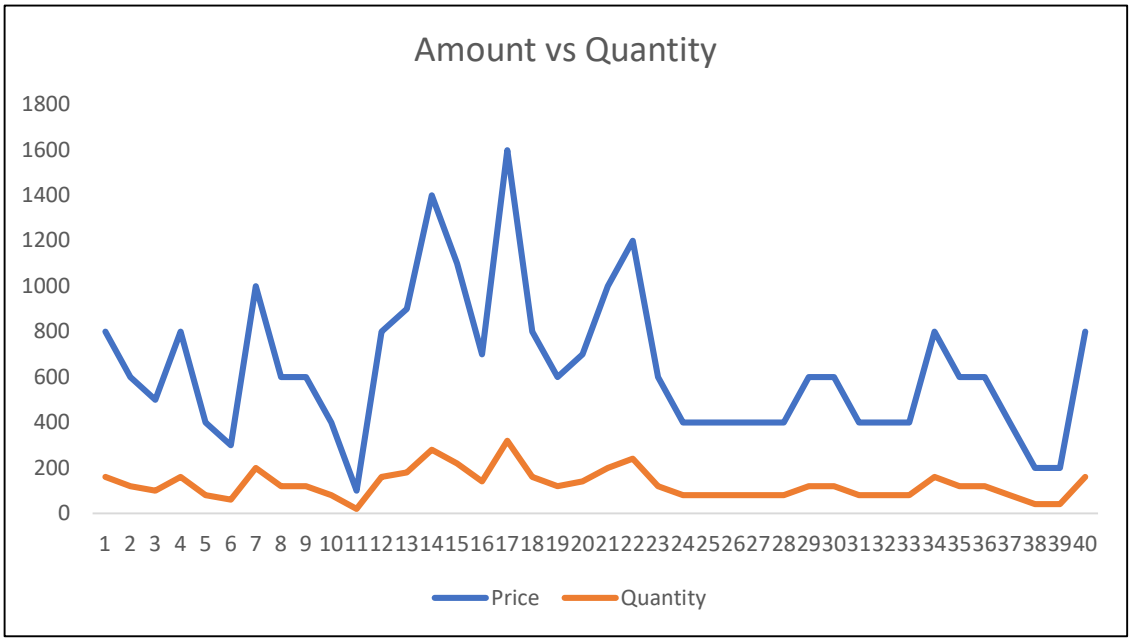
Figure 1: Custard Apple Pulp Processing

The authors had facilitated village organization women to start a custard apple processing unit to make them sustainable and make an example of entrepreneurship in Dharur block of Beed district (Maharashtra). Earlier, they were involved in cotton harvesting as labourers and got ₹100 wages per day. The government gave a grant of approximately ₹5 lakhs to start a processing unit. The processing output result details have been given in Table 1.

Table 1: Output of Processing Unit in 1 Month

Pulp Made by VO (Kg)	856
Total pulp sold (Kg)	727
Net quantity available (Kg)	129
Total sales value	₹ 137,404.98
Gross Profit	₹ 40190

It may also be noted that it is a perishable commodity and is available for a very short period of 1-2 months. An average of 10 women were involved in the whole process including procurement, processing, and market linkage. The technical agency facilitated their endeavours. The targeted customers for the processed pulp of custard apples were the ice cream industries, local juice vendors among others.



Previously, the tribal women of Beed district depended on the local aggregator who in turn had a monopoly in this region. Hence the custard apple farmers in the district were not able to get good prices for their yields. The aggregators used to buy custard apples from the local farmers at rate of ₹4-5₹/kg and sell the same at the rate of ₹80 or more in the city markets. After the setting up of the custard apple pulp processing unit as part of government intervention, the local farmers were able to get ₹12-14 per kg.

Figure 2: Custard Apple farmers having an interactive meeting on setting up processing unit

Figure 3: A custard apple farmer involved in processing of the fruit

CONCLUSION

The case is based on a small unit of extracting the pulp and selling them at local market. Only 10 women are involved in the processing. More than 50 tribals women sell the custard apples to the processing unit. Also, the processing unit is engaged in extracting the pulp only. However, there are several opportunities available to the local micro entrepreneurs. They can get involved in converting custard apple pulp into powder and sell the same on various online platforms. Thus, a seasonal venture can be converted into a round-the-year enterprise for the tribal women. For example, custard apple can also be used for making jam, fruit-flavoured yoghurt, fruit drinks and syrups, with fruit extracts from custard apple (Hoyos, 1980), juices (Sinthiya and Poornima, 2017), candies, and wines (Kadam (2001), ice-cream (Yadav et al., 2010)), squash (Sravanthi et al., 2014), milkshake (Bakane, 2016), vinegar (Raichurkar and Dadagkhair, 2017) or nutritional flour (Souza et al., 2018).

Involvement of the technical agency to provide their expertise to the tribal women is limited for a short period. Once the processing unit takes off, the technical agencies exit the scene. Hence the village-level processing units are under constant threat from the big players. Hence, it is imperative for the government to also create safeguards for the tribal women who come forward to start their own small ventures in the form of custard apple pulp processing units. Further, the government can increase financial support to make such ventures sustainable. Moreover, such endeavours can be gainfully integrated with self-help groups. Also, the government can make concerted efforts to promote the non-farm sector in the country to help small and marginal farmers in supplementing their income during lean seasons when there is no work in the farms.

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Entrepreneurial Orientation and Circular Business Practices: A Conceptual Framework

U. Amaleshwari[*] and Jeevitha R.[**]

ABSTRACT

The idea of a circular economy is becoming more popular in academia, business, and public policy. A circular economy is an alternative economic model that reduces waste, pollution, and the lack of resources. On the other hand, numerous studies have been studied under Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO). The dimensions of EO, such as risk-taking, innovativeness and proactivity, are studied to draw a relationship with Circular Practices. The literature study examined the theories' ideas and ways of thinking about them. It also gave a framework that pointed out the problems and the research gaps. The research design comprises of developing a hypothetical model with Entrepreneurial Orientation as the exogenous variable to test the endogenous variable of Firms Performance. In addition, Circular Practice targets Performance as a mediating variable. The methodology used in this study is quantitative that contains a random sample of Entrepreneurs in Tamil Nadu, India. The questionnaire is suggested for collecting and

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analysing data with SPSS version 18.0 and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) 3.0.

Keywords: Circular Practices, Entrepreneurial Orientation, Resource-based view, Sustainability, Circular Economy

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is identifying and exploiting business possibilities at the individual opportunity nexus. (Shane S & Venkataraman S, 2000). The GEM 2022 report defines entrepreneurship as starting and operating a company. When entrepreneurs start new businesses, they create jobs, income, and value-added, the three pillars of economic growth. They often introduce new goods, technologies, or processes (GEM 2022). Economics, psychology, and sociology were the most significant influences on the study of entrepreneurship. Schumpeter (1934) and McClelland (1967), considered to be the founders of the field of entrepreneurship studies, looked at the topic from a psychological point of view. They focused on people as the main subjects of their studies. Between 1980 and 2005, mainstream entrepreneurship studies shifted in this regard. (Kirchhoff 1991) This method used economic and strategic theories to understand entrepreneurship during this period (Frese & Gielnik, 2014). Choosing to go into business for yourself opens various doors. It brings in more money from economic and industrial activity, investment returns, job opportunities, foreign direct investment (FDI), and increases in national income.

In addition to their regular company activities, many smaller companies have started to use environmentally friendly practices, environmental legislation, environmentally friendly talents, and innovative ways to get resources to help the environment (Rizos, 2016). The rise of the collaborative economy led to technological advances that gave people more freedom and made connecting with others easier. Platforms for working together can make it harder for their businesses to stay in business (Fang & Li, 2022). Many entrepreneurs and business owners are very optimistic and consider social and environmental issues when making decisions. These worries may go away as incomes rise, however. Since many of these economies have already felt

the effects of change on society and the environment, it may not be surprising that less wealthy countries take these issues seriously (GEM, 2022). As a result, practitioners, and researchers of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) want to focus more on environmental problems and ideas like the circular economy (CE) (Cullen and De Angelis, 2021).

The concept of a circular economy (CE) can be summed up in the expression "reduce, reuse, and recycle," which aims to strike a balance between promoting economic development and preserving the natural environment. It attempts to circumvent the inherent flaws of a straight business model, defined as "take, make, use, and dispose of" (EC, 2015). We need to move toward a new "circular" paradigm based on reducing, reusing, and recycling resources. This approach facilitates the closure of the loop in economic systems, thereby generating environmental and economic advantages across various levels of analysis, as stated by EC (2015) (EEA, 2016). At the organizational level, the implementation of Circular practices (CP) is facilitated by various behaviors, such as the prioritization of regenerative resources, the conversion and elimination of waste, the design of durable and reassembled products, and the integration of products and services in 'product-service-systems' (PSS). These practices offer significant opportunities for cost savings and revenue generation (Stahel, 2013). To use the CE framework, businesses need to make significant changes to their strategies and develop entrepreneurial skills in crucial areas (Tura et al., 2019). This article employs the resource-based view (RBV) theory of the firm.

According to Wiklund and Shepherd's (2005) assertion, there needs to be more examination regarding the correlation between a company's resources (VRI) and its organization (O) in elucidating its performance within the context of the VRIO terminology. They propose that more research should be done on the correlation because there are signs that managerial decisions can affect how the firm's resources are used in response to changes in the environment and new opportunities. Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) is an essential metric for organizations because it can increase the firm's resources by focusing the attention of top-level managers on the best way to use resources to find and take advantage of opportunities.

This research seeks to cover this void by establishing an EO model that influences the objective performance of Circular Practice by minimizing its challenges to improve the performance of firms. Specifically, this study will focus on improving the performance of firms. This study aims to respond to the following research question: Which EO structures influence the achievement of cyclical practices by target performance to enhance firm performance?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This research is built on the Resource-based view (RBV) theory. According to RBV, organizations' resources are essential in accelerating performance and ensuring competitive advantage (Hitt et al., 2011). This school of thought says that the diversity of a company's resources gives it its unique competence, which determines its level of ongoing success and helps it grow. (Barney, 1991). Researchers (Barney & Clarke, 2007; Newbert, 2007) say that a company's improved performance may be due to better use of the company's internal resources. The idea of a resource-based view (RBV), which focuses on companies' internal capabilities that function as building blocks to generate competitive advantage and enhance firms' performance (Shah et al., 2019; Barney, 1991), is highly significant from the standpoint of business performance. RBV looks at what a company can do on its own, which gives it a competitive edge and improves how well it does its job. The researcher came up with the idea that better and more long-term growth needs an accurate assessment of the resources available inside an organization. According to Morgan et al. (2009), appropriate articulation of an organization's internal resources and the methodical use of those resources are essential to achieving a competitive edge and maintaining the firm's development over time. As a result, this research aims to establish a conceptual framework that considers three significant aspects of Entrepreneurial orientation, Circular Practice target performance, and firm performance. The business will be more efficient if it makes suitable investments in its own resources, responds quickly to market changes, looks for opportunities, and is willing to take risks to put forward new ideas, especially if the circular practice is developed at the same time.

ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) is an essential aspect of entrepreneurship and strategy. It shows the management's vision and guides the organization's efforts to develop new ideas that help customers and the businesses that serve them. (Smith & Jambulingam, 2018). EO is an organizational trait that reflects how "being entrepreneurial" is realized in organizations or business units. The particular area of entrepreneurship is understood as indicated by risk-taking, innovativeness, and proactiveness. EO refers to how these characteristics are manifested in organizations or business units. (Covin & Slevin, 1989; Miller, 1983). To be more explicit, the term EO "refers to the processes, practices, and decision-making activities that lead to new entry," with the dimensions antecedent to new entry being risk-taking, innovativeness, proactiveness, autonomy, and competitive aggressiveness. (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). According to the conception of Miller, Covin, and Slevin, EO is expressed in the standard variation of risk-taking, innovativeness, and proactiveness. To be more specific, EO can be seen in the typical differences in how these processes show up in behavior. Polites, Roberts, and Thatcher (2012) explain that EO is a "profile construct" based on how Lumpkin and Dess think about it. This means that EO is represented by how the dimensions of the construct are merged into an overall profile. Both ways of thinking about the situation may be defended. (Covin & Wales, 2019).

EO is the behavioral predisposition of an organization towards creativity, proactiveness, and risk-taking that contributes to organizational performance (Isichei et al., 2020; Dankiewicz et al., 2020; Kramoli & Dobe, 2020; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Risk-taking refers to the proclivity of an organization to undertake endeavors and engage in actions that entail an element of unpredictability in their outcomes. (Kallmuenzer & Peters, 2018). A risk-taking attitude measures a person's willingness to make choices regarding endeavors with a high likelihood of success (Anderson & Eshima, 2013).

The performance of the business is positively correlated with the risk-taking behavior of entrepreneurs, as perceived from the SMEs' standpoint. (Wiklund & Shepherd, 2005). According to Lumpkin and Dess (1996), there exists a variation in the propensity for risk-taking and its

outcomes at both the organizational and structural levels, which can be attributed to the goals and objectives of the organization. The willingness to take risks "represents the willingness to take advantage of opportunities that have arisen in the environment," even though the company and the entrepreneurs know "neither the likelihood of its success nor the consequences of its actions." Risk-taking "represents the willingness to take advantage of opportunities that have arisen in the environment" (Rodrigo-Alarcon, 2018). Thus, The literature presents various risk-taking strategies to address operational crises in firms operating in the Central European region. The availability of financial tools, financing solutions, and digital intelligence, including IoT and Big Data, is crucial for enhancing the performance of firms, as suggested by recent studies (Cantu et al., 2021; Gong et al., 2020).

H1: Risk-taking has a positive influence on achieving the target of Circular Practice target Performance of SMEs.

The concept of innovation pertains to the extent to which an organisation is inclined towards innovating its business operation processes. (Zufiqar et al., 2019; Bhatti, Rehman, & Rumman, 2020). Innovation enables the organisation to capitalise on novel prospects, meet customers' demands through novel products and services, and assume the role of a pioneer in the sector. (Isichei et al., 2020; Shah et al., 2019). Furthermore, individuals who exhibit a proclivity for innovation are likely to possess a greater capacity for identifying diverse channels of financial resources than those who exhibit a lower inclination towards innovation and access beyond the conventional methods of loans and shares (Christian Stone, 2016).

H2: Innovativeness has a positive influence on achieving the target of Circular Practice target Performance of SMEs.

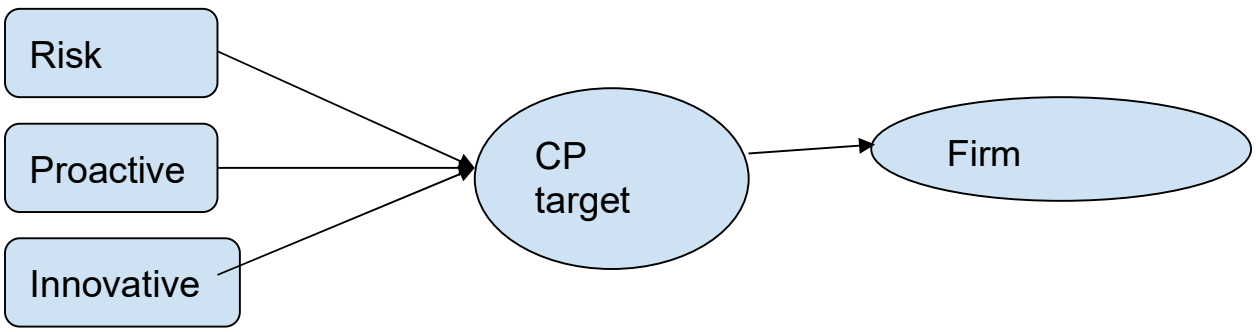
The notion of proactiveness pertains to the capacity of an organisation to anticipate and take proactive measures in response to the demands of consumers by providing novel products and services that have yet to become familiar to any other entity in the industry (Kallmuenzer &

Pefactor, 2018). The internal factor that plays a crucial role in the success of an organisation is proactiveness. This factor allows organisations to capitalise on first movers in the industry, indicating a high level of entrepreneurial activity (Isichei et al., 2020; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). The capacity of an organisation to anticipate the future demands of consumers and effectively meet those demands is a crucial driver of business performance. The market analysis allows the organisation to assess present market demand and anticipate future expectations, potentially resulting in business expansion and enhanced performance (George & Marino, 2011). Hence, proactiveness encompasses not only current business operations but also those of the future. The attribute of proactiveness enables enterprises to forecast emerging concepts and recognise prospects within the market. (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996).

H3: Proactiveness has a positive influence on achieving the target of Circular Practice target Performance of SMEs.

CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT TO THE HYPOTHETICAL MODEL

A theoretical framework was created to evaluate the model for the research objectives after an in-depth assessment of the relevant literature, taking the research challenge, and performing an extensive examination of the relevant theories and models. The framework was used to build hypotheses using the following constructs. The exogenous variable was considered as variables of EO, including risk-taking, Proactiveness and Innovativeness of an Entrepreneur. The endogenous variable is the Firms Performance, and the mediating variable is Circular Practice Target Performance.



Model Figure: 1

METHODOLOGY

The research is centered on investigating theoretical constructs or latent variables that are not directly observable, commonly referred to as latent variables. This study focuses on the latent variable of Entrepreneurial Orientation among Entrepreneurs and Managerial individuals in Tamil Nadu, India.

As latent variables are not subject to direct observation, they cannot be measured directly. This study considers Risk-taking as an exogenous variable. In contrast, the observed variables are Proactiveness and Innovativeness—the above components are indicators of the fundamental constructs they embody. The additional mediating variables comprise Circular Practices' target Performance as indicators. Upon implementation of PLS-SEM, an evaluation is conducted to determine how each indicator variable contributes to representing its corresponding construct. Additionally, an assessment is made to determine the effectiveness of the collective set of indicator variables in representing the construct, focusing on reliability and validity. The present evaluation pertains to assessing the measurement model utilising the partial least squares-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) approach. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) facilitates the evaluation of theoretical constructs and their interrelationships with measured variables and latent constructs. The PLS-SEM method also enables the assessment of the degree of fit between the theoretical model and the empirical data. (Hair et al., 2014).

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS

The present study has analyzed the impact of Entrepreneurial Orientation on the performance of firms, with Entrepreneurial Orientation considered the exogenous variable and firm performance as the endogenous variable. The mediating factors are directed towards the Circular practice target Performance variable. Numerous studies on entrepreneurship provide evidence of the significance of skills, sustainability and green Orientation. This paper tries to draw a relationship between the Entrepreneurial Orientation towards circular practices and its impact

on firms' performance. Subsequent research endeavours may empirically examine the hypothetical framework designed to evaluate Entrepreneurial Orientation and Circular Practice.

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Nuances of Supply Chain Paradigms: Evolution and Future Research Scope

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ABSTRACT

Supply chains act as the backbone of the world economy. The ever-increasing challenges and complexities have led to several revolutionary concepts in supply chain practice. This study aims to capture the significant research orientation and practices of supply chains and future alignment with challenges of inexperienced nature. The increasing importance of Hyper-agility, Industry 5.0 considerations and evolving sustainability paradigms have been discussed. This study aims to capture the robustness of current supply chain practices to address future challenges regarding the human-centric Industrial Revolution, extreme time pressure requirements, and incorporating evolving dimensions of sustainable practices in the changing business landscape. Reconfiguration and flexible supply chain strategies have been suggested as the robust platform for future evolving drivers.

Keywords: Flexibility, Reconfiguration, Hyper-agility, Industry 5.0

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INTRODUCTION

The drivers of supply chain practices in the contemporary business world are continuously evolving. As a result, the supply chain is also under continuous improvement to maintain a competitive edge under such diverse market scenarios. Although the practices and policies are market-dependent and intra-dependence between stakeholders involved, optimal alignment of supply chain practices and policies is always open to improvement. The supply chain is a system of systems. It encompasses various activities like procurement, transportation, loading/unloading, manufacturing, storage, inspection, marketing, etc., where the task is to align these activities and resources with the market needs with utmost efficiency and responsiveness. In the present business world, competitive edge depends upon the rivalry of 'supply chain vs supply chain' and the involved efficiency and efficacy.

Today the world has emerged as an intelligent global village wherein a product/service conceived as good at one part may be demanded from anywhere. The fulfilment of such demand requires the involvement of units at geographically dispersed locations and leads to an extended/global/ultimate/long supply chain structure to ensure 7Rs (Garcia and You, 2015). The dynamic and collaborative perspective of supply chain management empowers the utilization of different philosophies and improvement tools of other sectors or industries to address the challenges it faces in the day-to-day operation and long run. One such industry at an arm's length synonymity with the supply chain is the manufacturing industry, and the successfully implemented tools and principles have been of great significance in tangible and observable terms. This relation attracts researchers and academicians from engineering and management backgrounds to foster the qualitative as well as measurable aspects of the field.

Lean, agile, leagile, resilient, sustainable, digital, flexible and reconfiguration paradigms are the most discussed paradigms in supply chain literature, as depicted in Fig. 1. The evolving triggers and challenges of the 21st-century demand supply chain researchers and practitioners of robust, innovative concepts and their applications to maintain a competitive edge. Although the research efforts from both fields are continuously developing, a methodology or tool of universal fit for all the instances and challenges, whether from the theoretical or quantitative aspect, is infeasible.

Failure of supply chains at challenging times has resulted in unfortunate experiences and sufferings for individuals, society, the environment, and the global economy. The transition

from managing individual management silos traditionally to the supply chain aspect emerged as the more holistic and practical approach. And presently, supply chains, especially global ones, are responsible for the worldwide availability of products and services. The supply chain has always been challenging as it deals with several conflicts, interests, regulations, and targets. Supply chain models are need-oriented and require tuning to improve performance from whatever aspect is demanded or conceived as prime importance. Innovation, real-time decision-making, sustainability orientation, and human-centric are the critical ingredients identified to gain a competitive edge for supply chains in future (Turner, 2023). Supply chains are continuously evolving to attain a competitive edge, and this study aims to cover the practices that are present in practice and explores suitability towards future challenges.

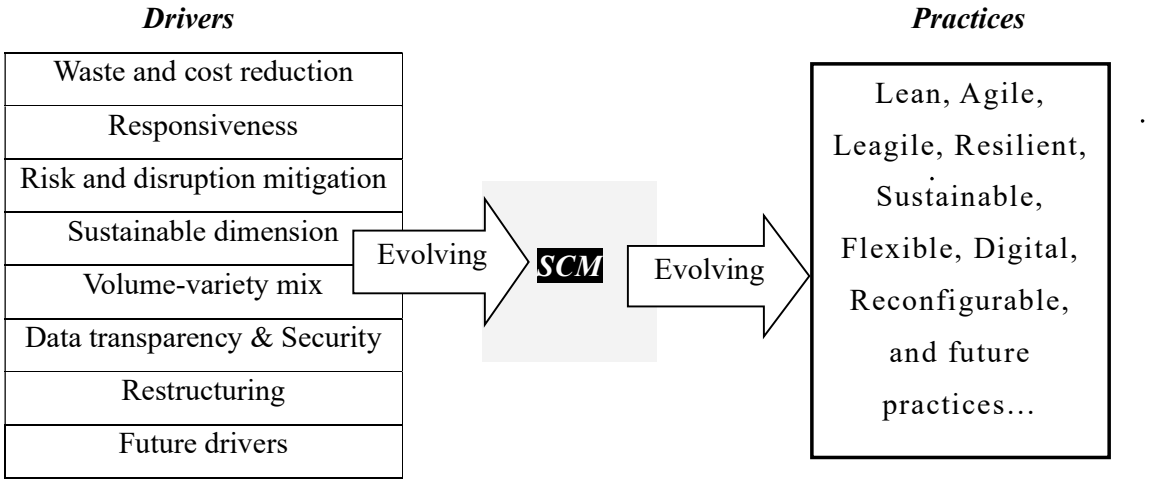

Fig 1. Drivers and supply chain major research practices

BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH MOTIVATION

The academic records illustrating applications and conceptual demonstrations of different SCM (Supply Chain Management) practices were identified and subsequently categorized based on their period of introduction in SCM research.

Lean, Agile and Leagile Concepts

The research developments in lean concepts can be traced back to TPS, by Womack et al. (1990) popularised lean in the book 'The Machine that Changed the World'. Lean practices focus on developing a value stream for eliminating muda, doing more with less, cost reductions, volume-centric production and working well in a stable and predictable demand. Agile, on the other hand, as a bearer of competitive advantage, focus on responsiveness and

the ability to respond rapidly against uncertainty and is suitable for high-end innovative technological products with shortened life-cycle (Yusuf et al., 2004; Aggarwal et al., 2006 & Singh and Pandey, 2015). Two critical lessons were identified in a review by Hoek (2001), carrying the past decade of academic literature as streamlining the operations and achieving an agile supply chain. Although the two practices, lean and agile paradigms, seem similar, but are different and have some overlapping concepts. The study by Narasimhan et al. (2006) concluded that the quest for agility might include lean as a precedence practice but not necessary in the case of pursuing leanness.

Similarly, regarding performance measures/metrics improvement, delivery speed and reliability act as the overlapping concept between the two paradigms. The literature on lean and agile concepts indicates chronological developments in critical attributes and overlapping/dual aspects between the two paradigms. It has been suggested that leanness acts as a foundation for agility (McCullen & Towill, 2001), or in other terms, agility as a precursor to leanness (Hormozi, 2001).

The two paradigms were combined to form the so-called leagile paradigm with the positioning of the de-coupling point. To qualify as successful leagile, lean and agile cannot be applied at the same point and lean should be applied upstream and agile downstream about the de-coupling point (Pattanaik,2021). While adopting lean, inventory levels need to be reduced, but from an agility view, customers are supplied with what they need at the right time, even with high inventory. Thus, a balance between cost reduction and responsiveness maximisation is desired; the portion of lean and agile in total SC might change dynamically and seldom encounters pure leanness, and pure agility may be observed in real business practices. Hence supply chain approach can be changed according to circumstances. It is not suitable to declare that one is better and the other is worst. Instead, they complement each other, and the combination depends upon market conditions (Kisperska & Haan, 2011).

Resilient and Sustainable Concepts

Resiliency has been applied in several scientific fields like engineering, sociology, ecology, economics, psychology, and organization management with different perspectives. Supply chain resilience utilizes the aspect of flexibility, dynamic capacity, and adaptability approach towards negative as well as positive influences of the environment (Ponomarov & Holcomb, 2009). It was identified as one of the critical components of Supply Chain Risk Management

(SCRM), with overlapping concepts of organizational agility under dynamic competition, i.e., the ability to cope with unexpected challenges, survival under threats, and exploit challenges to take advantage of opportunities (Sharifi & Zhang, 2009). Parallel developments in resilience concepts, i.e., restoration or rebound aspect (fail-safe design from an engineering perspective) and beyond restoration towards further development (safe-fail design from ecological perspective) of novel capabilities with better strength can be identified in various interpretations of literary study (Coutu, 2002; Fiksel, 2006 & Vogus and Sutcliffe, 2007). The most grounded enablers of resiliency in the supply chain have been suggested in the review work carried out by Ponis and Koronis (2012), such as agility, flexibility, velocity, visibility, availability, redundancy, mobilization of resources, collaboration, and supply chain structure knowledge. Significant overlaps have been identified in literary studies dealing with resilience definition and capabilities and a better perspective considering resilience as an adoptive and evolving nature guiding supply chains to consider sense, respond, control, recover and evolve to a more robust state, thus, gaining competitive advantage.

In the review by Carter and Rogers (2008), several potential intersections with social/environmental/economic aspects have been identified, and a broader framework of sustainable supply chain management has been presented, which includes risk management, transparency, strategy, and culture towards triple bottom-line goals for the supply chain. The research development aspects of sustainability have undergone objections, often identified as costly undertakings by the company to achieve a win-win situation, and were considered low-hanging fruit. Ideal sustainability occurs at the intersection of social, environmental, and economic goals in strategic vision, and aggregated network effort comprehensively orients towards these goals.

A coupling of efforts towards the triple bottom-line concepts has been agreed towards several benefits such as cost savings, design for reuse, better working conditions, increased motivation, productivity, less absentee, enhanced reputation, and broader social acceptance, among others. Theoretical developments in the sustainability aspect of the organization utilize concepts from population ecology theory, consideration of energy as the master resource, RBV (Resource-based view), and suggested practices as the run for the acquisition of energy resources at low cost, vertical coordination, contracts, joint ventures, partnership, and alliances and enables accessibility to member's technologies thereby, ensuring effective utilization of resources. Knowledge has also been considered one of the prime resources that

can be utilized to attain a sustainable edge against competitors. Knowledge gained through experiences of sustainable procurement, processing and delivery among stakeholders results in waste and cost reduction goals, responsiveness achieved, and adaptive capacity under risk and uncertainty positively influences trust and other performance measures of stakeholders.

Flexible approaches and increasing accessibility to resources are crucial to sustainability and long-term vitality. Although resilience has not been considered a part of sustainable thinking, overlapping concepts of reducing long-term risks from resource depletion, harm from products such as pollutants and waste, societal safety, food insecurity, climate change, and population growth but proactive management of such risks at an early stage will provide an inimitable edge against competitors in the long run. Within the context of sustainability, risk management focuses on the understanding and control of the risk associated with the triple-bottom-line concept.

The essence of risk management and further transparency on social, economic and environmental issues has been realized as part of the sustainability thinking of organizations for risk assessment of stakeholders and deciding priorities. Organizations mention risks in their sustainability report and continuously examine risks at stakeholders' locations to minimize reputation downfall and facilitate transparency towards sustainable development. Formation of crisis teams and the audit of their contingency plans to ensure adequate response and recovery, sharpen practical skills, coordination improvement, and identification of trouble spots are some of the disruption mitigation plans as a part of sustainable practice before the onset of an emergency.

Flexible and Reconfiguration Concepts

From the manufacturing perspective, internal flexibility traces back to TPS aiming to eliminate waste that does not add any value from the customer's point of view, acts as a predecessor of lean production (Womack et al., 1990), and later externally extended to organizations and finally to supply chains in decades of 21st century (Duclos et al., 2003; More & Babu, 2008). The supply chain flexibility provides options and features on which most of the literature studies agree are the utilization of inter-firm as well as intra-firm flexibilities under risk and uncertainty, focusing on adaptability of linkages between partners and incorporating strategies/structure/network design changes, agility for proactive

responsiveness, flexible robustness in relationship and orientation of entities towards goal attainment.

Flexibility, in general, is a multi-dimensional and complex concept, and the implications associated with supply chain practices are imprecise and inconsistent, ranging from the practices at individual resource, shop floor, plant level, operational and at the system level. The triggers and enablers of flexibility have been identified in a literature review carried out by Tiwari et al. (2015), in which critical flexible practices to mitigate risk and uncertainty are identified as encompassing adaptability, collaboration, integration, transparency and trust, postponement, agility, outsourcing, restructuring, redundancy, and combination with alternative resources and links.

Despite the advances in research angles of lean, agile, resilient, sustainable, and flexible, the search for a versatile integral actor which incorporates and guides research implications from different research aspects has been identified as reconfiguration (Dolgui et al., 2020), with its origin in robotics dealing with the restructuring of modules in space. Reconfiguration has been argued, as the extension of flexible manufacturing aspects emphasizing the aid of self-adjustments and adaptability, for rapid response to changes in a cost-effective manner for companies (Koren et al., 1999).

Traditional literature studies suggest reconfigurability in terms of changeability for quick and cost-efficient addition/removal of resources or products at the equipment, production, and system level, which now has been extended at the supply chain level for design under cost-efficient, responsive, resilient, sustainable manner and can be considered as the prime concept to incorporate viability (Ivanov, 2020). Modularity, integrability, convertibility, scalability, diagnosability and mass customization are the key characteristics of reconfiguration and employing these characteristics, the decision and evaluation of the supply chain capacity to adapt to changes can be performed (Biswas et al., 2019; Zidi et al., 2021a; Zidi et al., 2021b). In scarce studies, quantitative evaluation and optimization aspects of reconfigurable supply chains (Jafarian and Bashiri et al., 2014; Guo et al., 2018 & Pattanaik et al., 2022).

Extracted Motivation

While going through available literature on different supply chain paradigms, the overlapping concepts and interdependence criteria towards a robust practice can be observed. Starting

with the network management (NM) phase, the transition towards a leagile paradigm, leagile SC in resilient paradigm and further extension of these concepts towards performance improvement under TBL (Triple bottom line) aspects of sustainable thinking, a more holistic view of integrated SCM was obtained. The aspects of sustainability and further inclusion of redundancy units and collaboration ability enabled SCF (Supply chain flexibility) and aligned as per the industrial aspects of the present context resulting in RSC (Reconfigurable supply chain).

A common consensus towards reconfiguration as the highest level of development in the supply chain paradigm with all-inclusive paradigms has been ascertained. The developments in the reconfiguration field have led to the identification of several overlapping paradigms, covering almost all the well-established paradigms and critical factors to access reconfiguration allied performance measures but are limited at the system level. Although digital tools can automate and integrating the supply chain as a system of systems and enable better transparency, the sophistication level required for incorporating everything from a spreadsheet to the dynamic integrated system of several players, capabilities as well as robotics and Industry 4.0 enabled technologies to inspect, report, sense and adaptive response initiation makes the whole picture rather complex.

Skilled expertise is required to excel in maximum aspects, i.e., multi-tasking and multi-field experts of the integrated process as a system to interpret data and allied response triggering mechanisms to maintain a competitive edge under several complex considerations. Innovation and dynamic network capabilities practices to maintain a competitive edge are getting tougher daily. Such complex analysis requires the integration and collaboration of critical thinking and Industry 4.0 smart practices, an essence of Industry 5.0, to improve responsiveness at a more sustainable dimension, thereby prospering the requirements at the individual, societal, and global economic levels. The research paradigms under Industry 5.0, evolving sustainable dimensions and real-time dynamic agility are nascent. This study explores the present research paradigms, i.e., flexibility, reconfigurability, and digital SC outputs as a facilitator of prime importance towards future technologies.

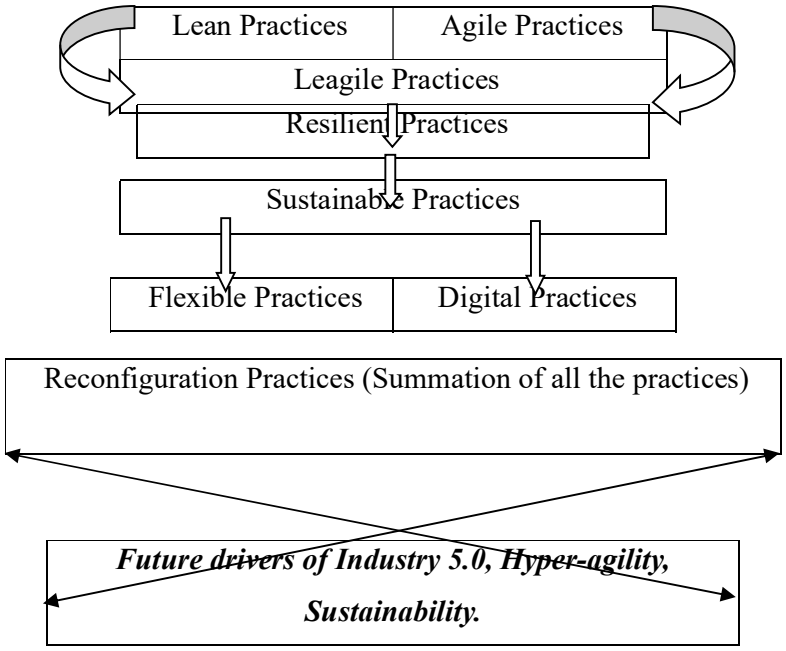

Fig 2. A research roadmap to Reconfiguration as the platform towards future drivers

THEORETICAL ADVANCEMENTS ON FUTURE DRIVERS AND SUITABILITY OF RECONFIGURATION AT THE FOREFRONT

Hyper-agility Aspect of Supply Chains

Supply chain agility has been considered an enabler of quick response to changes and providing a competitive edge under uncertain situations. However, during the disruption of Covid-19, several organizations with supply chain agility could not respond quickly (Do et al., 2021), and the agility capabilities evaluation was a necessary step for future events. Supply chain hyper-agility is an extension of supply chain agility. Certain distinct concepts can be identified as hyper-agility focusing on the quick response to grab the opportunities under disruptive events against long-term planning, and at the operational level, can introduce new products or services within a few days.

Opportunities under such disruptive events are only short-term and may not have long-term benefit opportunities. The short-term perspective of goals and response at ultra-speed is at the core of hyper-agility and is suitable for colossal demand but for a shorter period. Disruption can even lead to extraordinary demand, and under Covid-19 disruption, several organization ramped up their supply chains extraordinarily, and some even changed the product category

earlier in operating. Although the practices adopted could not fulfil the extreme demand for essential medical kits and tools, further government intervention was required (Sharma, 2020 & Iyengar, 2020).

Critical paradigms utilized under a hyper agile environment emerged as dealing with the network alignment to capture the aroused opportunities from disruption is reconfiguration, expansion of working employees, i.e., flexibility aspect, Industry 4.0 automation, data analytics tools and several online social platforms, i.e.., digital tools for economic performance improvement. Although the research development in hyper-agile paradigms is nascent, specific requirements needed to achieve hyper-agility, have been highlighted from the broader perspective of the dynamic capability view (Raj et al., 2023).

Customer Involvement

The level of customer engagement is a critical factor and affects supply chain operations. Mass production strategy was considered suitable for Industry 2.0 aspects, and globalization rendered personalized goods and services to customers at low cost. Industry 3.0 was based on developments in computing and IT tools utilization for various customized products, i.e., mass personalized products demand. The shift in nature from cheap, mass-produced products, exploiting economies of scale to more expensive customized products and Industry 4.0 aspects demanding design and manufacturing as per individual customization at a low cost and in large quantities poses a challenge for the supply chain.

Flexibility aspects of the volume-variety mix, make-to-order processing technologies, quality, costs, and times under supply chain practices are continuously evolving, credited to cloud-computing, blockchain, IoT, data mining, ERP and other data integration tools, vision technologies like AR, VR and CAD, automation and robotics, digital manufacturing, and other technological tools (Novais et al., 2019).

The Transition towards Industry 5.0 and Evolving Sustainable Dimensions

A new paradigm of the digital supply chain is under discussion, i.e., Industry 5.0, which focuses on incorporating societal and environmental perspectives. The dehumanization aspect of Industry 4.0 concerns society, individuals as well as government and the urge to include significant human contributions in future industrial revolutions, their return to workplaces,

explore the hybrid potential of cognitive skills, critical thinking abilities of humans and speed, accuracy by automation and intelligent production system (Longo et al., 2020).

The concept of Industry 4.0, wherein automation and robotics have been utilized as competitors to humans, now under the aegis of Industry 5.0 practices will rely on collaboration and integration of human-machine interactions, AI algorithms, and automation to enhance productivity and response. AI in people's daily life and Society 5.0 are some of the implications that will not only be restricted to organizations but also more open towards solving societal problems. The sustainability aspects will be extended for the benefit of society and for the sustainability of the economy by creating expertise skills in human-machine connectivity and allied employment opportunities. Resilience, sustainability, and digital SC are concurrent strategies to adopt in Industry 5.0.

Robust Practices and Concurrent Strategies

Supply chain evolving triggers have led to several developments in concepts and practices. However, the quest for robustness and innovation to maintain a competitive edge under any circumstances needs continuous refinement and performance measures evaluation. Dynamic supply chain/network structure capabilities are continuously subjected to performance improvements from individual or aggregated research concepts. The series of shocks and disruptive events caused by the onset of the Covid-19 outbreak and several geographically dispersed regulatory constraints hampered the performance of the global supply chain and resulted in several sufferings.

Research practices developed to date were subjected to critical, practical, and unfamiliar exposure, wherein most failed in achieving performance improvement and target achievement under extremely high pressure of demand for essential commodities. As a result, several organizations went bankrupt, and laying off employees hampering sustainable practices became common. Human-centric focus and extension of sustainable dimensions/targets to societal and individual prosperity were realized. Specific organizations could sustain and improve their performances in economic, societal and reputation aspects by utilizing innovations, robustness, flexibility, and reconfigurability quickly.

As evident from previous discussions, SC's reconfiguration principles and digital aspects with dynamic capabilities and innovative practices hold an absolute position under such scenarios to deliver a competitive advantage. The concurrent aspect of the dynamic supply chain

requires simultaneous sensing, responding, controlling, evaluating and decision-making, wherein an optimal engagement and management of different robust practices under one single plan will be no easy task.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The theoretical aspects and practicality of Flexible SC, Digital SC and ultimately, Reconfigurable SC act as the facilitator towards goals for human-centric, resilient, and new sustainability dimensions for Industry 5.0 and the hyper-agile environment. The research developments and practices in the supply chain indicate exploration of the overlapping concepts and interactive relationship study as a prime methodology. The literature study establishes the reconfigurable practices as of fundamental position under whatever scenario subjected to and can be applied to other significant research angles under different orientations. In this sense, leagile, flexible, resilient, digital, and sustainable practices can be incorporated into a single reconfiguration framework with practices from different paradigms. Moreover, current research practices' drivers are continuously evolving; therefore, reconfiguration prospects must be explored under such situations. As a system of several systems, the supply chain will be under dynamic uncertainties, and disruptions may become a new norm. The task under such a situation would be increasingly complex to generate a competitive edge.

The present study on evolving paradigms in supply chain research indicates several indications of triggers that may be evolving. It may emerge as a sudden event in the not-too-distant future, and the capabilities and innovativeness will be again under examination for target achievement and performance improvement. In this context, Industrial 5.0 and allied extension in sustainability dimensions and the need for supply chain agility under extreme pressure from a reconfiguration perspective have been carried out since the Reconfigurable SC has been advocated as the most recent and robust among all the paradigms. The consensus that can be agreed upon is the positioning of Reconfiguration at the forefront for future evolving challenges.

Although evolving drivers may be divergent from existing research practices, the scope and applicability of the reconfiguration principle cannot be denied. Rather than focusing on individual research paradigms requirements, the reconfigurations provide a more holistic and robust practice that can be utilized with dynamic capabilities and integration towards several

challenges of future business context. In future, along with the engineering perspective of the supply chain, the ecological perspective may be combined, and consideration of innovative practices will treat the supply chain as an ecosystem. Reconfiguration practices under such ecological systems and subjected to divergent drivers will require identifying and interacting several factors from the qualitative and quantitative aspects.

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Slugfest in a Virtual Sales Meeting: A Case Study on Toxic Work Culture

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ABSTRACT

This case is about deteriorating organizational culture and climate at a bank due to toxic to behaviour of a senior manager who humiliates the team members during review meetings. The team members are totally out of focus, and they constantly miss the targets. Use of slangs by the senior manager has failed to motivate them to accomplish their goals. Rather, the team members have become irritable, depressed, and anxious. Can the scenario be upturned? The case raises more questions than it answers: Why the manager behaves in the manner he does in formal sales meetings? Why the team members tolerate unbecoming conduct of the manager? Why the team members never confront the manager over the use of slangs in formal sales meetings? How the toxic behaviour of manager impacts the organization in general and the team members in particular? What would be right measures for improving culture and climate in such organizations?

Keywords: Organizational Culture, Organizational Climate, Toxic Workplace, Stress, India

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Mithun Biswas was excited about the zoom meeting at 3:00 PM on June 5, 2023. He had joined Kharagpur branch of MyBank recently as a sales executive and it was his first sales meeting in the new organization. However, other members of his team did not demonstrate the same enthusiasm. He was visibly miffed about his colleagues' lukewarm response towards the schedule of the sales meeting through video conference which was likely to be addressed by Regional Sales Head of Eastern Region of the bank based in Kolkata. In the previous organization, Mithun had received sales executive of the year award for three consecutive years. He never felt the heat of such sales meetings. Rather he would always look forward to sales meetings as forums to showcase his accomplishments and take up challenging targets. So, when the mood in his office became sombre after announcement of the meeting, he was baffled.

Lalit Ghosh, Priya Majumder, Rohan Bose, and Raju Dastidar were busy preparing their reports and framing their responses for the 3:00 PM meeting since morning. They had joined the Kharagpur branch of MyBank during past couple of years. They were aware of the temperament of Gautam Sarkar who had joined MyBank as Regional Sales Head in Kolkata office about six months ago. He was a man in a hurry. He would lose his cool at the drop of the hat. Moreover, he would become furious if anyone missed the sales targets hardly appreciate those who were able to bring in business as per the set goals. He considered that the sales executive did not work at all if he/she simply achieved the sales target. According to Gautam, sales targets were restraining many sales executives to take initiatives to exceed the desired numbers. Hence, he would spare none in the sales meetings.

The sales meeting commenced exactly at 3:00 PM. There were over 30 sales executives from different branches of MyBank in Paschim Mednipur district of West Bengal. Kharagpur branch was the largest in Paschim Mednipur district in terms of number of savings as well as current accounts, quantum of deposits, disbursal of loans, etc. However, Gautam was never satisfied with the sales team of Kharagpur branch. He was a bit lenient towards the sales executives deployed in Salboni, Ghata, Belda, Chandrakona, Ramjibanpur, Garbeta, Balichak, Dantan, Mohanpur, Keshiari, Keshpur, Narayangarh, Sabang, Daspur, Debra branches of MyBank. Nevertheless, sales executives of these branches were also bearing the brunt. Gautam believed that these were the smaller branches of MyBank to cater to the needs of social

banking while the branches in Kharagpur and Midnapore required to be profit centres. Midnapore was the district headquarters while Kharagpur was the largest town in the Paschim Mednipur district. Sales head of Midnapore branch was politically connected. Gautam was aware about the influential caucus in Midnapore and hence avoided any confrontation with them.

First in the line of fire was Lalit who was the senior most sales executive in the Kharagpur branch. Gautam was in no mood to spare anyone in today's meeting. Lalit shared his PPTs on Zoom. Humiliation meted out to him in the last meeting was still fresh in his mind. He started presenting his numbers. He had performed about 30% better than the previous month. Still, he fell short of the set targets. Gautam again started chastising Lalit Ghosh in most demeaning way. He told Lalit Ghosh that it was sheer luck that there was 30% increase in numbers from the previous meeting but the rise in numbers did not demonstrate any labour put by him or any initiative taken to accomplish the set the target. When Lalit tried to explain his position, pat came the command from Gautam, 'Just shut-up, you rascal, I need numbers, not your lame excuse'.

Mithun was devastated at the spectacle. But more was yet to come. The moment Priya started presenting her report, Gautam got agitated. He shouted at her, 'You are such a senior sales executive, aren't you ashamed of yourself'. He further slammed her, 'If you can't sale banking products, go and work in your kitchen which is the right place for you'. Mithun started thinking whether it was okay for such a senior officer like Regional Sales Head to make awful comments in public, especially about female colleagues. He felt like switching off his laptop. Fearing a backlash from the 'big boss', he decided to stay put. Soon it was Rohan's turn. He told Gautam that next month he would surely meet the target. He begged forgiveness for having missed the numbers in the previous month. Gautam was not in a mood to stop. He retorted, 'You bastard, if you cannot perform, why are you coming to the office –do you think it is a charity'.

By the time it was the turn of the last sale person to present his report, the atmosphere in the zoom meeting had become horrific. All the choicest abusive terms in Bangla and English were used liberally for all the sales executives present in the meeting. Although Mithun escaped

the fury of Gautam today, he knew what was in store for him during the forthcoming month. He had attended hundreds of sales meetings in his brief stint as Sales Executive in three organizations so far. Yet, he never experienced such a venomous attitude of a senior manager towards his team members. Himself a star sales professional, Mithun never faced any unpleasant remarks from his bosses. All the three sales managers under whom Mithun got rigorous training earlier, were quite polite, compassionate, empathetic, and accommodating. Hence the team members usually went out of their way to attain the set objectives. On several occasions when the team member faltered, manager came forward to support and guide him.

Mithun became apprehensive about his own performance in the new organization. He was filled with self-doubt about the decision to join MyBank. Now he understood why the sales team at Kharagpur branch of MyBank were so prickly. There was hardly any camaraderie in the team. They hardly supported each other and barely indulged in any professional or social conversations. Their focus was to attain their individual targets by any means. Mithun also observed that his fellow sales executives appeared stressed and fatigued. Some of them were also taking medicines to manage their blood pressure. The scenario in the branch office was absolutely depressing. The branch manager was rude to everyone in the office. Even the colleagues worked in silos and never bothered about others. Generally, the clients had to wait in long queues to get things done. Many of the clients were contemplating closure of their accounts with MyBank. Mithun had overheard the conversations among the clients and was concerned about the prospects of the Kharagpur branch of MyBank.

Mithun had no clue about how the organizational climate at MyBank could become conducive for all the internal stakeholders. There was none in the branch office to share his concerns. Now he had two options –either he would move on to yet another organization or approach the corporate HR for interventions. Mithun chose the latter. He shot an e-mail to Raman Bagchi, the HR Head of MyBank, requesting him to take corrective measures before it was too late. Mithun had little idea about how his e-mail would be taken up. But he was pleasantly surprised to know that an inquiry into the conduct of Gautam Sarkar was initiated, and he was suspended for the time being. Moreover, Raman had also constituted a committee to suggest action plan for improving the organizational culture and climate at MyBank. Mithun was the youngest member in the committee. News of his induction in the committee was

quite overwhelming. Can he really add any value to the deliberations of the committee? Mithun immersed himself in thinking aloud… More than ideas to change the scenario, Mithun had several questions: Why Gautam Sarkar behaved in the manner he did in a formal sales meeting? Why did the team members tolerate his conduct for long? Why the team members never confronted Gautam on use of slang? How the toxic behaviour of Gautam impacted the organization in general and the team members in particular? Also, how the committee should approach the whole issue? Can the committee really be able suggest appropriate measures for improving the organizational culture and climate at MyBank? More specifically, what would be right measures for improving organizational culture and climate at MyBank?

DISCLAIMER

The case study is based on a true story. However, the names of the characters and organization have been altered to protect their identities. The case can be used in the MBA class to decode the nuances of toxic work culture and encourage students to thinks about corrective measures which can upturn the organizational climate for good.

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Workplace Conformity and Workplace Values: A Comparative Study of TCS and Infosys

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the difference between workplace values and workplace conformity at two IT giants, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys. Conformity is the act of aligning oneself with the group, and the bulk of employee activities in a company revolves around sustaining group conformity as a group habit. An organization's guiding beliefs and principles are its organizational values. They include openness, confrontation, trust, authenticity, proaction (taking the initiative, preplanning, preventative activity and evaluating alternative payoffs before acting), autonomy, collaboration, and experimentation. For the current study, TCS and Infosys employees provided 60 responses to a 4-point scale questionnaire based on the OCTAPACE profile and a 7-point scale questionnaire based on the normative influence scale. The result of the study highlights the workplace ideals having a significant difference with workplace conformity at both TCS and Infosys.

KEYWORDS: Workplace value, Workplace conformity, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys

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INTRODUCTION

The 21st era is anticipated to be driven by informational technology, and India is seen as a technological powerhouse at the centre of global attention. Businesses must utilize IT-based services to increase productivity, facilitate business operations, and develop efficiently and financially in today's global market. The IT industry is vital for the exponential expansion of our GDP and the generation of millions of jobs. Expanding the Technology sector will require us to develop at the same rate as China in all fields and help us capture the global market. The pandemic has presented TCS and Infosys with significant business potential. The demand for technological breakthroughs in most types has offered the two tech giants enormous opportunities. To remain competitive, TCS has consistently invested in exploration and innovation, staff training, intellectual property, and alliances. During March 2021 quarters alone, the company closed 30 deals, establishing itself as the market leader.

Infosys has evolved towards a client-focused solid organization. It is also focused on forming collaborations with the world's leading corporations. Infosys is also spending on designing and developing the appropriate digital transformation-accelerating solutions. In addition, to combat the current epidemic, Infosys has made significant adjustments to its infrastructure to facilitate employees' work from home. The company achieved carbon neutrality as part of its ESG program in 2020. In contrast, Infosys could only secure nine deals throughout the quarter.

The expansion and increase in production in several IT organizations are characterized by a shared set of values and standards with their personnel. These principles can impact company decisions and contribute to developing a collaborative and supportive professional environment. Knowing a company's culture and its guiding principles can assist professionals in assessing whether a particular workplace is a good fit. An organization's business activities are guided by its values, standards, and regulations. These principles can impact the operation of internal teams, the goods and services a business provides, and the promotional resources and public communication a company shares. By defining acceptable behaviour norms, they can help employees comprehend management's objectives and priorities.

Within our social contexts, conformity is pervasive. Occasionally, we are aware of our behaviour, but we often act unconsciously without much thought or awareness. Sometimes, we approve of things with which we disagree or behave in ways we are aware we cannot control. Conformity facilitates the organization's behaviour as a single entity working together as a team. Businesses must have regulations and guidelines that streamline and govern output standards to retain brand integrity. It may be claimed that conformity stifles innovation, but it also eliminates this issue by clarifying organizational norms and employee expectations. It enables companies to have a degree of uniformity, which increases the likelihood that everyone is working towards the same objective. Here it is pertinent to mention about a major research on the theme –Solomon Asch, a noted psychologist, recruited participants to execute what they thought was a simple perceptual test in these 1950s experiments. Pupils had to pick a line that matched one of three lengths. Individuals choose the right decision. When questioned by confederates who had been informed of the study and purposely chose the wrong line, 75% of participants conformed at least once. This experiment effectively exhibits normative influence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Values express what's essential to you and your organization. Your values reflect your beliefs. They reflect who you are and shape your culture. When considering values, think about your conduct and decisions. If companies know who they are and who they aren't, they can hire and fire the correct people. Employment branding and corporate culture boost hiring and retention Effectiveness. Culture determines behaviour in any company. Culture is built on an organization's values. These ideas help us understand what's right and wrong for our colleagues, clients, and community.

In firms that prioritize corporate culture and have authoritative management that imposes business procedures, objectives, and regulations, normative conformity may limit the socialization of employees. In such companies, normative discipline in a friendly culture may erode individual characteristics, manifesting the adverse effects of autonomy and dependence (Costas, 2012). Sitlani (2012) shows that the OCTAPACE culture in an organization makes the employees better managers. Managers have a better chance to improve their skills, abilities, and knowledge in a favourable culture than in an unfavourable

culture. Further, Jayanthi and Bhuvaneshwari (2014) observe, “In terms of OCTAPACE aspects, Ponni Sugars Erode Pvt Ltd prioritizes collaboration over authenticity, autonomy, trust, proactivity, openness, and confrontation in terms of workplace culture. The confrontation was placed last among the OCTAPACE dimensions”.

Sharma, and Joshi (2017) in their research highlight government banks' functional autonomy and effective governance. Public banks' work environment, job performance, and well-being were constantly and significantly superior. Private banks' work culture, requirements, and hours suggest higher work strain, more acute job stress, and disregard for human issues. Researchers, namely Lim, M. S., Kim, C. Y., & Yoo, J. W. (2020), first believed, depending on a sampling of Korean manufacturing firms, as in a sector with significant isomorphic dynamics, firms would be compelled by homogeneity to adhere to industry norms and standards. The data also indicate that when the industry is dynamic, the favourable impacts of strategy conformity and invention on firm success are diminished.

METHODOLOGY

The author mainly used standardized questionnaires called OCTAPACE and the Normative social influence scale. The OCTAPACE profiling is a 40-item questionnaire that provides eight-valued profiling of an organization's ethos. Openness, autonomy, trust, confrontation, proactivity, autonomy, authenticity, collaboration, and experimentation are measured through the test. There are two parts to the instrument. In section I, items 1 through 24 (three for each of the eight values) explain values, and the respondent is asked to indicate the degree to which his organization values each item. Part 2 has 16 items on beliefs, two for each of the eight values, and the respondent assesses the extent to which the organization shares each belief. The Normative social influence scale is a six-item test that assesses a behaviour change deemed essential for group membership. Conformity stems from our desire for positive interactions with other individuals. Sixty responses were collected from diverse TCS and Infosys workers. With the aid of a manual, scoring and interpretation were accomplished. The t-test was used to compare research groups across multiple dimensions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The importance of the study is based on an assessment of workplace conformity and workplace values at Infosys and TCS, two of the largest IT companies in the world. The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To study workplace conformity and openness between TCS and Infosys.
2. To study workplace conformity and confrontation between TCS and Infosys.
3. To study workplace conformity and trust between TCS and Infosys.
4. To study workplace conformity and authenticity between TCS and Infosys.
5. To study workplace conformity and proaction between TCS and Infosys.
6. To study workplace conformity and autonomy between TCS and Infosys.
7. To study workplace conformity and collaboration between TCS and Infosys.
8. To study workplace conformity and experimentation between TCS and Infosys.

HYPOTHESIS

H1: No significant difference will exist between openness and conformity in Tata consultancy services (TCS) and Infosys employees.

H2: There will be no significant difference between confrontation and conformity in Tata consultancy services (TCS) and Infosys employees.

H3: There will be no significant difference between trust and conformity in Tata consultancy services (TCS) and Infosys employees.

H4: There will be no significant difference between authenticity and conformity in Tata consultancy services (TCS) and Infosys employees.

H5: There will be no significant difference between proaction and conformity in Tata consultancy services (TCS) and Infosys employees.

H6: There will be no significant difference between autonomy and conformity in Tata consultancy services (TCS) and Infosys employees.

H7: Collaboration and conformity in Tata consultancy services (TCS) and Infosys employees will remain the same.

H8: No significant difference will exist between experimentation and conformity in Tata consultancy services (TCS) and Infosys employees.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this study, eight hypotheses were tested. Before explaining the findings of the hypothesis testing, a statistical summary of the testing results is also provided.

Table 1: Comparison of TCS and Infosys regarding workplace conformity and workplace Culture of openness

	TCS (N=31)		**Infosys (N=31)**		T	P-value
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation		
Conformity	21.8387	6.455	23.5806	5.39614	-1.153	0.254
Openness	15.5484	1.99731	15.9032	1.75793	-0.743	0.461

Table 1 provides an overview of TCS and Infosys' mean and standard deviation scores on conformity and openness, respectively. There is no significant difference between TCS and Infosys on both conformity (0.254) and openness (0.461) as the P-value > 0.05.

The study by Chang, et al. (2023) demonstrates workplace conformance is a vital characteristic that encourages the transmission of knowledge among Taiwan employees to enhance their competition and creative potential. In the Indian context, however, Yadav (2014) discovered that the intended magnitude of OCTAPACE value (usually believed to be greater) is insignificant for all elements in sample Delhi-NCR universities. In universities serving as examples, the expected degree of openness is less than the actual level of openness. The P-value from the preceding table indicates and supports the study's conclusion that openness and conformity do not differ significantly between TCS and Infosys in the Indian context.

Table 2: Comparison of TCS and Infosys regarding workplace conformity and workplace Culture of confrontation

	TCS (N=31)		**Infosys (N=31)**		T	P-value
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation		
Conformity	21.8387	6.455	23.5806	5.39614	-1.153	0.254
Confrontation	16.2581	1.93163	15.9355	1.76891	0.686	0.496

Table 2 provides an overview of TCS and Infosys' mean and standard deviation scores on conformity and confrontation, respectively. There is no significant difference between TCS and Infosys on both conformity (0.254) and confrontation (0.496) as the P-value > 0.05.

Essawi, and Tilchin (2013) developed the structural adaptive value confrontation leading model to foster a constructive confrontation between intended corporate values and present employee values as part of the leadership strategy of transforming corporate culture. Further, Essawi and Tilchin (2013) initiating and directing the constructive confrontation that enables responding to feedback through the sophisticated and adaptable use of diverse methods that facilitate and stimulate the adoption of the new organizational ideals. The preceding research identifies confrontation as the latest organizational value, and the table demonstrates that TCS and Infosys have no significant differences between confrontation and conformity because, as per Gerard (1964), with confrontation, the people who choose to submit to others do so more frequently than in situations without confrontation. So, it is possible that such scenarios did not occur in both institutions, resulting in a negligible difference between confrontation and conformity.

Table 3: Comparison of TCS and Infosys regarding workplace conformity and workplace Culture of trust

	TCS (N=31)		**Infosys (N=31)**		T	P-value
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation		
Conformity	21.8387	6.455	23.5806	5.39614	-1.153	0.254
Trust	15.1935	2.13572	15.3226	2.18155	-0.235	0.815

Table 3 provides an overview of TCS and Infosys' mean and standard deviation scores on conformity and trust, respectively. There is no significant difference between TCS and Infosys on both conformity (0.254) and trust (0.815) as the P-value > 0.05. According to Rédha, et al. (2022), organizational trust favours the organizational commitment. Following Yu-Yu Chang, Wisuwat Wannamakok, and Yi-Hsi Lin (2023), normative compliance in the workplace may weaken expressive bonds in societal interaction and individuals' desire to demonstrate vulnerability, which are foundations of interpersonal bonding and emotional trust. In contrast, the preceding table indicates no significant difference between TCS and Infosys employees regarding workplace conformity and trust.

Table 4: Comparison of TCS and Infosys regarding workplace conformity and workplace Culture of authenticity

	TCS (N=31)		**Infosys (N=31)**		T	P-value
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation		
Conformity	21.8387	6.455	23.5806	5.39614	-1.153	0.254

Authenticity	13.8387	2.05096	13.1935	1.60040	1.381	0.172

Table 4 provides an overview of TCS and Infosys' mean and standard deviation scores on conformity and authenticity, respectively. There is no significant difference between TCS and Infosys on both conformity (0.254) and authenticity (0.172) as the P-value > 0.05. In the framework of DEI, authenticity has different meanings. It is about being yourself on the job without adhering to other people's expectations. Since the preceding table indicates no significant difference between authenticity and conformity, it can be inferred that TCS and Infosys personnel are inherently authentic.

Table 5: Comparison of TCS and Infosys regarding workplace conformity and workplace Culture of pro-action

	TCS (N=31)		**Infosys (N=31)**		T	P-value
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation		
Conformity	21.8387	6.455	23.5806	5.39614	-1.153	0.254
Pro-action	16.9355	2.48912	16.7742	2.43187	0.258	0.797

Table 5 provides an overview of TCS and Infosys' mean and standard deviation scores on conformity and pro-action, respectively. There is no significant difference between TCS and Infosys on both conformity (0.254) and pro-action (0.797) as the P-value > 0.05. Tims, et al. (2020) observe that thriving personnel strongly moderated the link between conscientiousness, proactive organizational behaviour, and job meaningfulness. However, this study indicates no substantial difference between TCS and Infosys employees' pro-action and workplace conformance.

Table 6: Comparison of TCS and Infosys regarding workplace conformity and workplace Culture of autonomy

	TCS (N=31)		**Infosys (N=31)**		T	P-value
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation		
Conformity	21.8387	6.455	23.5806	5.39614	-1.153	0.254
Autonomy	13.8387	2.05096	13.1935	1.60040	1.381	0.172

Table 6 provides an overview of TCS and Infosys' mean and standard deviation scores on conformity and autonomy, respectively. There is no significant difference between TCS and Infosys on both conformity (0.254) and autonomy (0.172) as the P-value > 0.05. Hanaki and Owan (2013) rightly mention that an organization with a high level of autonomy encourages individuals to explore novel concepts and builds its strength on individual learning. In contrast, the high-conformity organization assimilates individual unique expertise base and promotes organizational learning through regular information sharing between individuals. It implies that autonomy increases experimentation and trust, yet according to this study, there is no substantial difference between TCS and Infosys employees regarding autonomy and workplace compliance.

Table 7: Comparison of TCS and Infosys regarding workplace conformity and workplace Culture of collaboration

	TCS (N=31)		**Infosys (N=31)**		T	P-value
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation		
Conformity	21.8387	6.455	23.5806	5.39614	-1.153	0.254

Collaboration	15.7419	2.23559	15.5161	2.07960	0.412	0.682

Table 7 provides an overview of TCS and Infosys' mean and standard deviation scores on conformity and collaboration, respectively. There is no significant difference between TCS and Infosys on both conformity (0.254) and collaboration (0.682) as the P-value > 0.05. The preceding table indicates that there is no substantial difference between workplace conformity and collaboration among TCS and Infosys employees, contradicting the study, by Tims et al. (2020) which demonstrates that non-conformists are more willing to work together for the greater good, but conformity to societal standards can make individuals less likely to cooperate.

Table 8: Comparison of TCS and Infosys regarding workplace conformity and workplace Culture of experimentation

	TCS (N=31)		**Infosys (N=31)**		T	P-value
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation		
Conformity	21.8387	6.455	23.5806	5.39614	-1.153	0.254
Experimentation	15.3871	2.20117	15.1290	2.49989	0.431	0.668

Table 8 provides an overview of TCS and Infosys' mean and standard deviation scores on conformity and experimentation, respectively. There is no significant difference between TCS and Infosys on both conformity (0.254) and experimentation (0.668) as the P-value > 0.05. Pozzo et al. (2020) observe that since culture is social, cultural innovation is accessible. Cultural production should also facilitate technical and administrative innovation. Societies of practice (Lave and Wegener, 1991) can influence cultural innovation and provide a fertile setting for testing various indicators. DARIAH's twenty-one working groups, managed by their

members, are societies of practice where scholars of various degrees collaborate and co-create. However, this study found no substantial difference in workplace conformity or experimentation between TCS and Infosys employees.

The research results contradict past comparative studies that asserted a vital association between the values of OCTAPACE dimensions and conformity.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, all 8 hypotheses are accepted. There is no significant difference between all of the OCTAPACE values and conformity of TCS and Infosys employees**.** Social conformity may impede co-workers from understanding one another's personalities on the job (Turner, 1985). Thus, diverse workplace norms support normative conformity in different ways, and conformance positively or negatively impacts complex social networks. (Tang et al., 2013).

Also, there is an emergent need of a thorough and standardized explanation of the causes and outcomes of social adherence in organizational contexts. Extant literature does not conform whether employees with inherent values are involved in social conformance. No research has yet uncovered a significant difference between OCTAPACE values and conformance in two or more organizations. However, the conclusions of some of the prior comparative studies claimed a strong association among OCTAPACE cultural values. All said, the scope of this study is limited to Tata consulting services (TCS) and Infosys employees. Hence, it is imperative that more research may be taken up to test the inferences based on the current study.

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Impact of Diversity and Inclusion on Workplace Effectiveness

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ABSTRACT

In the current scenario, managing diversity and inclusion in the workplace has become the priority to survive the competition. In line with the popular perception of diversity and inclusion, this review paper explores how it may augment workplace effectiveness in terms of higher productivity, a culture of creativity and innovation, and overall financial performance. This study also provides insights into organizations' challenges when implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives. The article clearly emphasizes the need for comprehensive Diversity and Inclusion programme in any organization to retain a decisive edge over the competitors.

KEYWORDS: Diversity, Inclusiveness, Workplace, Organizational Effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

Diversity and inclusion are two interconnected concepts—but they are far from interchangeable. Diversity is about representation or the make-up of an entity. Inclusion is

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about how well the contributions, presence, and perspectives of different groups of people are valued and integrated into an environment." — Matt Bush, Culture Coaching Lead at Great Place to Work

Diversity and Inclusion are more than just buzzwords. They are becoming far more essential for a healthier working environment. Making them a priority invariably augments organizational effectiveness. Less inclusive organizations generally lack a culture of creativity and innovation. On the contrary, organizations with robust diversity and inclusion programs are ahead of their competitors. Diversity refers to differences that exist between different people in terms of their race, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, language etc. Inclusion means making people, who are in the minority, feel valued, respected, and treated equally. The organizations must adopt and implement Diversity and Inclusion programmes to attract and retain talented people irrespective of gender, caste, creed, skin colour or sexual orientation. The diversity and Inclusion framework seeks to treat people fairly, ensuring everyone gets equal opportunities in the world of work and the community.

SIGNIFICANCE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AT WORKSPLACE

Diversity and inclusion program in any organization results in augmented employee engagement, improved employee performance, enriched talent acquisition, a supplemented culture of innovation, bettered decision-making, and an upbeat organizational reputation. Hence, each point has been elaborated as under:

- **Augmented Employee Engagement:** Embracing and celebrating diversity within a company can increase employee commitment and a stronger sense of belonging. Feeling valued and acknowledged for their unique experiences and perspectives can enhance job satisfaction and overall engagement. It's crucial for organizations to not only strive for diversity but also foster an inclusive environment that recognizes and accommodates individual differences. By prioritizing employee belonging through diversity and inclusion efforts, companies can improve employee retention rates and create a more sustainable workforce.
- **Improved Employee Performance:** When employees feel included as an essential part of the company, they feel more inclined to perform their best. And so, it is not surprising that their intensity of performance is dramatically enhanced so is the quality of the

outputs. It has been observed that companies with good diversity strategy experience have about a 56% increase in job performance. In comparison, a single exclusion incident can lead to a 25% decrease in an individual's performance on a team project (McKinsey, 2020).

- **Enriched Talent Acquisition**: Embracing Diversity and Inclusion programmes in the workplace broadens the candidates' options to more diverse choices. But has it ever been realized how it also attracts more talent? When the company opens its doors to all kinds of candidates, it defines how it is viewed. According to research by Glassdoor, 76% of people consider D&I in the workplace a significant factor while evaluating a job offer or looking for new career opportunities (Glassdoor, 2021).
- **Supplemented Culture of Innovation:** A diverse workplace innovates more. Diversity is crucial for the success of any organization, as it brings a variety of perspectives and ideas to the table. People from different backgrounds can offer unique insights and innovative solutions that may not have been considered otherwise. Collaborating with diverse worldviews and skill sets fosters creativity and leads to more significant innovation. Research supports this notion. According to a study by GrowthForce, companies with above-average diversity had 19% higher innovation revenues. Prioritizing diversity and inclusion (D&I), initiatives is essential for organizations to remain effective and adaptable in rapidly changing industries. To be a thought leader in the industry, investing in D&I initiatives is crucial for success.
- **Bettered Decision-making:** Inclusion involves actively seeking out diverse voices in decision-making processes, which can lead to better outcomes by bringing in new perspectives and ways of thinking. Embracing diversity expands the pool of ideas and approaches and fosters an environment of respect and collaboration. Inclusive decision-making has been shown to offer a competitive advantage to businesses, as it allows for more informed and innovative solutions to complex challenges. Organizations can improve their decision-making processes by prioritizing diversity and inclusivity and driving long-term success.
- **Upbeat Organizational Reputation:** D&I initiatives significantly impact how an organization is perceived by various stakeholders, including employees, shareholders, customers, and the public. Prospective and current clients are likelier to engage with organizations that demonstrate a genuine commitment to these initiatives. Such

organizations send a powerful message that they value diversity and inclusion. Moreover, cultivating a diverse workforce helps organizations expand their reach to a broader audience and better comprehend the needs of their clients.

Figure 1: Top Ten Benefits of Workplace Diversity (Source: https://www.talentlyft.com/en/blog/article/246/how-to-build-manage-and-promote-workplace-diversity**)**

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies reveal that since 2021 and beyond, companies have devoted more attention and resources to promoting Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) programmes. Unfortunately, many organizations still struggle to measure the impact of their strategies and communicate that impact to a growing number of stakeholders. More than 1,600 CEOs have signed onto the CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion Pledge, and 40% of companies discussed diversity and inclusion in their Q2 2020 earnings calls versus only 4% the same quarter a year earlier. According to Gartner research, the number of HR leaders identifying D&I efforts as a top

priority was 1.8 times higher in 2020 than in 2019. Gartner analysis reveals an almost 800% increase in job postings for dedicated diversity recruiters (Romansky et al. 2021)

As the importance of diversity in the organizational context has increased, most organizations would like to research diversity–organizational culture linkage, its effect on diversity openness, and between diversity and performance at individual and organizational levels. Patrick (2010) found that diversity determines not only the results of the diversity within an organization but also the level of openness to dissimilarity characteristics among the organization's members, work groups, and culture. Despite the technological wonders of today's communication, international relations require us to deal with one another person-to-person. For this to be effective, one has to overcome language and stereotype barriers. This may require the mental elimination of terms like alien and the individual's perception as having a different background (Moran, Harris, & Moran, 2011).

There is robust empirical confirmation that successful diversity management and improved organizational performance are positively correlated (Ozbilgin and Tatli, 2008). However, a consistent finding is that differences should be sought in moderation. Group members' ability to elaborate diverse information may also develop over time as members become more familiar with each other's perspectives and develop transactive memory. This suggests that, especially for various work groups, it is essential that they can reach more extended tenure and that they are allowed a more extended start-up phase than more homogeneous groups (Knippenberg et al. 2004). (Patrick and Raj Kumar 2012).

The ability of individuals to influence the decision-making process and effectively contribute their mite to the organization depends on the extent to which they can access information and resources and are involved in work groups. “Inclusion” is also defined as fulfilling needs for belongingness and uniqueness. According to Optimal Distinctiveness Theory, employees’ needs of belongingness and uniqueness must be met to feel included. Further, to feel included, the unique characteristic of an employee must be valued within a group; more importantly, though, this uniqueness the person brings to the group must be allowed and encouraged to remain. Inclusive culture exists in the workplace when an organizational environment enables people with multiple backgrounds, mindsets, and ways of thinking to

work effectively together and to perform to their highest potential to achieve organizational objectives based on sound principles (https://www.gritandflow.com). The organizations have started coming forward to safeguard the interests of LGBTQ+ to create a holistic and inclusive workplace across the globe.

ROADBLOCKS IN THE WAY OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

A foundation of personal growth must be present to engage in meaningful professional growth. Individuals lacking in this foundation may pose a significant obstacle to successful DE&I training because only some employees are in the same space concerning their personal growth and emotional intelligence. Every person is shaped to some degree by their upbringing, whether cultural, religious, societal, or combinations of all or more influences. Implicit biases and prejudices harboured within are carried forward to the workplace. Individuals who do not possess a mature level of emotional intelligence may engage in acts that can be interpreted as racist or sexist without realizing the impact of their actions on other individuals.

As such, some organizations may need to move forward in the DE&I space at a fundamental level. A starting point would include examining the root causes of racism as a threshold foundation. A look back in history reveals the scourge of slavery and its impact on society over centuries and how the burden has plagued our nation, along with the guilt of those actions weighing heavily on our collective conscience. Superiority ideologies passed down from generation to generation are at the base in the formation of racial prejudice. Without exposure to diversity and the plight of people of colour in society in general and in the workplace, individuals cannot gain the pertinent information or develop the necessary empathy to address and remedy such issues (Baum, 2021).

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES FOR PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Cox and Lancefield 2021) underlined five strategic imperatives for promoting diversity and inclusion in organizations viz.

- CEOs as Champions of D&I efforts
- Integrating D&I efforts in corporate strategy

- Fixing accountability of top leaders and managers in successful implementation of D&I programmes
- Mitigating implicit bias at the systemic level
- Pivoting from diversity training to leadership development coaching

Figure 2 provides a holistic view of an inclusive environment at workplace based on multiple factors such as trust, common purpose/meaningful work, cultural competence, appreciation of individual attributes, equitable reward and recognition, access to opportunity, sense of belonging and respect.

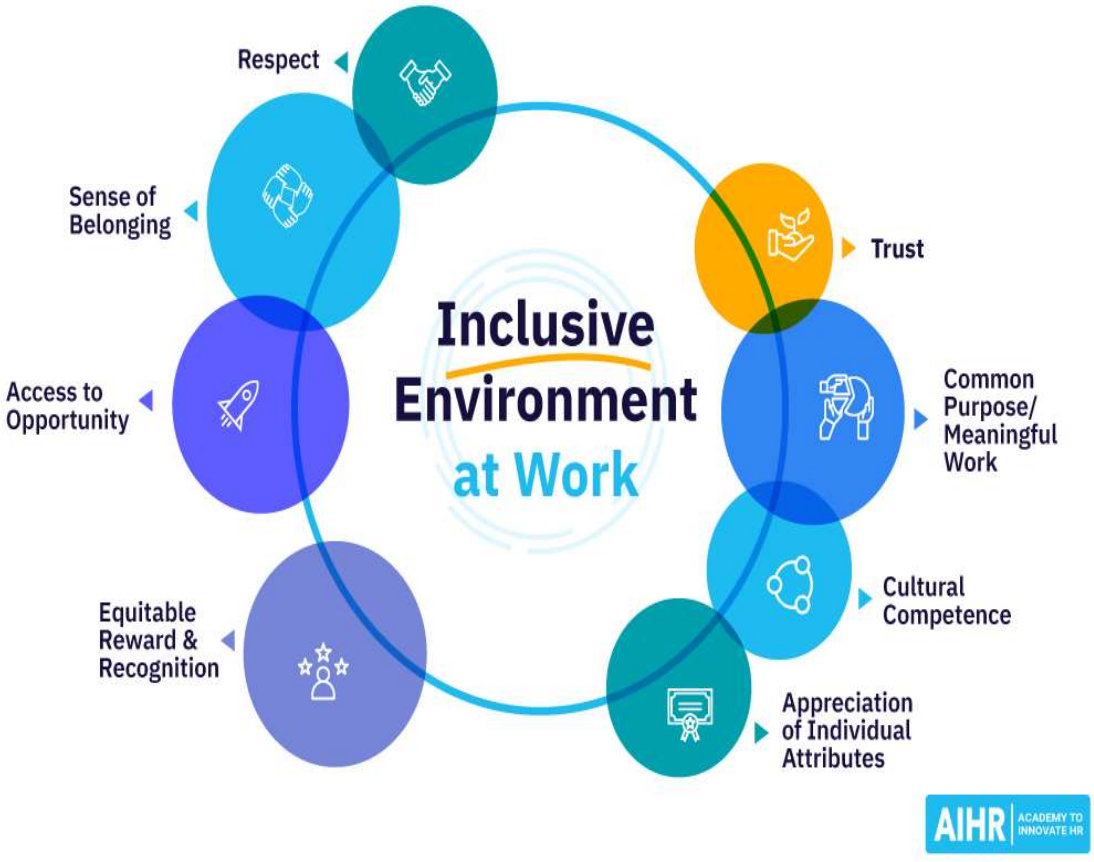

Figure 2: Inclusive Environment at Work (Source: https://www.aihr.com/wp-content/uploads/inclusive-enviroment-at-work.png)

Furthermore, Society for HRM has prepared a comprehensive checklist for inclusivity that the organizations must heed to foster a robust D&I programme (https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/0418/pages/6-steps-for-building-an-inclusive-workplace.aspx):

- Make sure company leaders understand that inclusion is about ensuring that everyone's voice is heard, opinions are considered and value to the team is evident.
- Train managers—and hold them accountable—to show that inclusivity is a core competency.
- Form an inclusion council with genuine influence and power.
- Value differences and create an environment where people can feel comfortable bringing their "full selves" to work.
- Identify underrepresented groups' needs and give them necessary support and resources.
- Provide workers with a safe space to voice their concerns.
- Benchmark key aspects of your organization's culture—and understand the employee experience—before making changes to promote inclusivity.
- Remember that daily interactions are the most telling sign of whether or not your company has an inclusive culture.

According to Cox and Lancefield (2021), 'There's widespread agreement on the need to improve diversity and inclusion in the workplace. But it's not easy to deliver on the promises made. It's time to adopt a more systematic, coherent approach. By following these five strategies, leaders can make more progress and create a more representative, fair, and high-performing workforce'.

CONCLUSION

The study focused on identifying workplace diversity and inclusion barriers and strategies to increase inclusiveness and awareness. Discrimination, prejudice, and ethnocentrism were identified as the most significant barriers to accepting workplace diversity, along with blaming the victim, stereotypes, harassment, and backlash. The preferred strategies for increasing inclusiveness included learning about cultural differences and business practices in overseas assignments, encouraging employees to accept these assignments, and providing language training. The study recommended admitting biases and prejudices, recognizing, and valuing

fundamental differences, and dispelling myths about diverse individuals in a group setting with friends or colleagues to reduce prejudices and stereotypes. By implementing these strategies, organizations can foster a more inclusive workplace culture that values and respects all employees.

In today's global market, organizations that embrace diversity among their employees are better equipped to understand and meet the needs of a diverse range of customers. A recent study in the IT industry has revealed that while most employees are open to diversity, a few are enthusiastic and have fully embraced the positive benefits of a diverse workplace. To foster inclusiveness, organizations implement strategies such as cross-cultural training, encouraging overseas assignments, and offering language training. Discrimination, prejudice, and ethnocentrism remain barriers to workplace diversity despite progress. Organizations must take deliberate steps to manage diversity and leverage the potential of their employees for competitive advantage.

Leadership at all levels must genuinely commit to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion to create a workplace culture that fully embraces these values. While there may be a long road ahead, continuing the conversation and taking action to effect positive change is imperative. There is vast scope for further study of the factors affecting diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Diversity management practices can be compared between industries, and their impact on employee productivity and job satisfaction can be studied. There is also vast scope for studies of perceptions of workplace diversity in different ethnic groups, religion-based groups, and marginalized groups.

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