Strategic Prudence in Workforce Management in International Airline Alliance Ground Staff Operations
Francis Kofi Kumaka

ABSTRACT

In the contemporary settings of 2020 and after, international airlines' alliance ground staff operations environment, a possible deficit in the formulation and implementation of effective strategies to ensure a diverse and inclusive workforce has the potential to affect an organization dearly and adversely. From exhaustive review and analysis, some U.S.-based international airline alliance leaders appear concerned with the challenges faced to ensure an inclusive and diverse workforce, as it has deleterious potential to negatively affect corporate sustainability and profitability. Grounded in the transformational leadership theory, the purpose of this single case study was to explore strategies U.S.-based international airline alliance leaders in ground staff operations use to successfully manage a diverse workforce to ensure organizational sustainability and profitability. Data were collected using semistructured interviews in computer-mediated conferencing format with five airline alliance leaders located in the state of Georgia, who held at least 2 years of successful experience in implementing strategies to manage a diverse workforce. Content and thematic analytical approaches served to analyze the data, leading to the emergence of a major theme of the importance of diversity and inclusion. From extensive research and the subsequent analysis of the data, a key recommendation is for airline alliance leaders to align diversity, equity, and inclusion policies with corporate human resources strategy. The expectations of contributing to positive social change are assured in employment, and the context of this study is possible if airline alliance business leaders display the management qualities in fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce, where the employee has opportunities to realize their potential within the enterprise.

Introduction

The globalized economy has transformed the operations of multinational corporations, while the pandemic has influenced further change. The contemporary work environment necessitates staffing with employees from diverse backgrounds to facilitate international business transactions (Nickerson & Valerie, 2018). Organization management practitioners and theoreticians have emphasized the value of workforce diversity in organizational performance and competitive advantage (Kundu et al., 2019). While hiring employees from various backgrounds in terms of culture, ethnicity, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender, and disability could present some challenges, many businesses endeavor to staff operations with a diverse workforce representation to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). It is in furtherance of social justice that the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) requirements in the United States are provided guidelines to ensure DEI and employment nondiscrimination laws(Daniels & Thornton, 2019).

The Changing Employment Landscape

Several airlines have forged strategicpartnerships in the global market since the late 1980s. The major areas of collaboration between the different airlinesare routing, code-sharing, block spacing, shareholding, and franchising (Bilotkach, 2019; Subramanian, 2017). As the business of passenger travel services involves international locations and geographies, airline alliancesare usually betweenU.S. airlines and foreign partners, which are staffed withdiverse workforces becausethe demographic fabric of the United States workforce is increasingly multicultural and multinational (Byrd & Scott, 2018; Wei, 2018). The Airline Deregulation Act of 1978 lifted severalfederal controls on airfares, routes, and entry into the air transport business. The removal of these restrictions enabled small airlines to provide low-cost offerings by carriers in fares to benefit from price competition to the disadvantage of the major airlines (Subramanian, 2017). September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks created a compelling need for restructuringin the airline industry, resulting in the emergence of four major global international airline alliances (Seo, 2020; Wei, 2018).

A well-trained and managed workforce plays an especially important role in an organization's performance (Vokoun et al., 2018). The objective of this research was to explore the management strategies implemented to manage a diverse workforce in collaborative airline ground staff operations. The implementation of the findings of this research study may contribute to organizational profitability

and the sustainability of U.S.-based international airline alliances.

The Grounds and Rationale for the Study

The Airline Deregulation Act of 1978 generated intense competition in the industry, forcing major U.S. airlines into international partnerships (Subramanian, 2017), necessitating effective diverse workforce management for organizational sustainability and competitive advantage in these alliances (Burns & Ulrich, 2016; Clark, 2017). The 11% decline inthe S & P stock index, low patronage of air transport, and falling airline revenues after the September 2001 terrorist attack (Burch et al., 2016) increased airline alliances, where the aim was to benefit from code-sharing, antitrust immunity, enhanced pricing, cost/risk sharing, and offering improved value propositions to travelers (Bilotkach, 2019). The identified macro-level problem from a business standpoint is that some leaders in U.S.-based international airline partnerships face the challenge of managing a diverse workforce essential for organizational sustainability and profitability of the alliance. Through analysis, the identified narrowly specific business problem is that some U.S.-based international airline alliance leaders in ground staff operations lack effective strategies to manage a diverse workforce to ensure organizational sustainability and profitability.

The Chosen Research Approach

A qualitative single case study was used for this research, to explore the strategies U.S.-based international airline alliance leaders in ground staff operations use to manage a diverse workforce to ensure organizational sustainability and profitability. The target population for the research consisted of 20 airline alliance leaders located in the state of Georgia, with a track record of successful implementation and experience in using strategies to manage a diverse workforce to contribute to ensuring organizational sustainability and profitability.

Qualitative researchers seek an in-depth insight into social phenomena within a natural setting or context using various research exploratory strategies, including open-ended questions in semistructured interviews, observation, data triangulation, and member checking (Mohajan, 2018). The qualitative research method was suitable for this study because the aim was to acquire an in-depth insight into a social phenomenon, notably in managing a diverse workforce, within its natural setting using semistructured interviews. Aquantitative or mixed approach was not appropriate for this studybecause the focus was not to measure relationships or test hypotheses, but rather to gain deep and meaningful insights from firsthand experiences of managers innately associated with the phenomenon of organizational management.

Principal Research Question and Interview Questions

The overarching research question for this study was: What strategies do international airline alliance leaders use to manage a diverse workforce to ensure sustainability and profitability?

The principal interview questions for this component of the research were:

1. What important managerial strategies are necessary for managing a diverse workforce in the ground staff operations of international airline partnership settings?
2. What challenges have you encountered managing a diverse workforce in international ground staff settings?
3. What specific sustainability and profitability strategies have you implemented to effectively manage a diverse workforce?

Theoretical Grounding

The conceptual perspective that grounded this single case study, was the theory of transformational leadership (TFL). Downton initially coined the term "transformational leadership" in 1973 and Burns later developed the term into a leadership theory in 1978. The benefit of adopting transformational leadership theory was that the postulations of charisma, vision, and integrity of the leader, when applied in management, often enable the employees to develop a sense of competence and creative self-efficacy, which contribute positively to productivity (Frazier, 2018).

As international airline partnerships necessitate the hiring of a diverse workforce, the transformational leadership style has the potential to facilitate leveraging diverse workforce management strategies to enhance the achievement of the international airline partnership objectives (Mokhber et al., 2015). The postulations enshrined in the transformational leadership theory were therefore pertinent in the contemporary management of diverse organizational workforce settings when diligently invoked and applied.

As a diverse workforce is an asset for competitive advantage (Nickerson & Valerie, 2018), the findings of the study are likely to contribute to advancing market share expansion and better employee remuneration. By enhancing business growth, productivity, and sustainability, the knowledge from the study findings, if applied, may lead to more satisfied and motivated employees, and, thereby, to positive social change.

A Review of Pertinent Literature

The globalized economy has given rise to multinational corporations, staffed with employees from diverse backgrounds, to satisfy the mandates of the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) requirements and to provide a cultural fit to stakeholders (Nickerson & Valerie, 2018). Organizations frequently enter intopartnerships with firms in target markets for economies of scale, take advantage of reduced transaction costs, as well as access and deliver superior value to a broader customer base (Kuznetsova, 2016). Having a diverse workforce in the US and global operations is commonplace, as international partnerships have become a business imperative that requires efficient management.

Business Sustainability

The motivations for collaborative business initiatives are to generate revenue, provide employment, and satisfy a particular need in the community. To achieve these objectives, it is sometimes necessary to adopt corporate governance that could sustain the organization as a profitable entity. Sustainability is imperative in business to achieve the medium-term and long-term goals of an organization (Silvestre et al., 2018). The concept of sustainability in business has evolved from a point where ethical, social, and environmental obligations were once considered peripheral or irrelevant to business (Vogt & Weber, 2019). Business sustainability in the 21st century must include a confluence in the melding of environmental stewardship, human resources management, corporate governance, human rights, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and corruption prevention (Mahsud et al.,2018). In the pursuit of corporate growth, organizations and airlines usually tend to adopt SBP, SCA, and SHRM. While these sustainability initiatives may be conducive to business growth, there is the tendency to consider them as mere buzzwords that may not necessarily bring economic solutions (Groves, 2019).

The contemporary business environment is full of challenges in the form of economic downturns, global financial crises, and debilitating diseases such as AIDS, COVID-19, and Ebola, not to mention uncertainties in a highly competitive market. Organizations, therefore, must take a keen interest in managing the human capital to navigate these challenges. Bouaziz and Zouhour (2018) noted that HR management often plays a significant role in developing and analyzing organizational resilience. Hiring candidates with the required knowledge and skills for the right positions is crucial in building the human capital that could steer the company through crisis and competition (Kendrick et al., 2019). The airlines in the United States have generally endeavored to hire qualified staff and have also been proactive to reach a $ 25 billion deal with the U.S. government to retain and pay airline workers during the COVID-19 pandemic (Crabb, 2020).

The Significance of Transformational Leadership

The principal tenets of the theory of transformational leadership are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Frazier, 2018). Transformational leaders invariably promote organizational commitment by aligning employee values, beliefs, and motives, with those of the organization. The positive traits of these leader**s,** such as inspirational motivation, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, may render the transformational leadership style suitable for diverse workforce management (Amina & Singh, 2017). The consideration and factoring of individual traits, in particular, may facilitate taking account of the circumstances of all the segments of the workforce in designing suitable and optimal management strategies.

While undertaking international expansion, some firms enter strategic alliances for greater customer outreach, economies of scale, cost sharing, risk reduction, and revenue increase (Bortoluzzi et al., 2018). The avenues for cost and risk sharing serve as motivation for increased revenue, market share expansion, profitability, and business growth. Some companies take advantage of international expansion to escape a hypercompetitive or saturated home market and, therefore, use international expansion as a strategyto enter an emerging or lucrative market (Yoder et al., 2016). Operating in the international market, however, does not guarantee success, as the cultural, legal, and strategic issues represent challenges some companies must navigate (Yoder et al., 2016).

In the travel industry, the global economy creates a situation where customers look for innovation in product offerings and, in the air transport industry, flexible and cheaper flight options along with attractive loyalty programs. Product, organizational, and marketing innovation constitute important drivers of internationalization. The resource-based view (RBV) of innovation refers to a strategic resource that facilitates firm expansion into international markets to gain a competitive advantage by offering new and value-added solutions to customers (Bortoluzzi et al., 2018). Strategic, tactical, and operational supplier-customer engagement provides avenues for product innovation (Jajja et al., 2017). In the air transport sector, innovation takes the form of routing mergers between partnering airlines, code sharing, block spacing, shareholding, loyalty programs, and franchising (Alexander et al., 2015).

The Advantages of Strategic Alliances

Strategic alliances are flexible arrangements for cooperation between companies, which canbenefit from the strengths of the partnership to solve organizational problems (Kuznetsova, 2016). Some businesses leverage these benefits for competitive advantage. In the global e-commerce environment, companies encounter threats from local and overseas competitors (Winata et al., 2016). To cope with challenges and derive economies of scale, the goal is often to offer customers better value for money, while penetrating new markets, some organizations engage in forming strategic alliances. Some of the governance structure options for strategic alliances include joint ventures, minority equity alliances, and contractual alliances (Teng & Das, 2008). Strategic networks in the air transport business involve a high level of competition, industry standards, and entry barriers (Kuznetsova, 2016).

Diverse Workforce Management

Managing a team composed of members with varying backgrounds is a particularly challenging undertaking. A well-managed diverse workforce brings about a competitive advantage (Schreier et al., 2019). Diverse workforce management is, thus, often considered a challenge for HR management, entrusted with placing importance on ensuring organizational justice (Ardakani et al., 2016). An organization's international expansion requires SHRM with an emphasis on cultural awareness (Karadjova-Stoev&Mujtaba 2016). The absence of SHRM in Euro Disney's initial strategy was the reason for the project's failure in Europe (Karadjova-Stoev&Mujtaba, 2016). Companies that have diverse, inclusive, and talent management strategies appear to outperform competitors on both talent and financial outcomes (Burns & Ulrich, 2016). The importance of inclusiveness in contemporary business constitutes the basis for increased programming and policy implementation in the US public sector, for improving cultural awareness (Carrizales et al., 2016).

Personal Role as the Researcher

As an African immigrant living in the United States, the depth of personal experience is that I have worked with a leading U.S. airline involved in strategic alliance arrangements with various airlines in Europe, South America, Africa, and Asia. Working with this multinational corporation has enabled me to understand how useful a workforce composed of cultural, linguistic, gender, religious, and other human differences could be in international partnerships. Using diverse workforce management strategies in providing leadership to employees of an international carrier involved in strategic alliances may be a way of ensuring profitability and sustainability.

Data source triangulation, an approach used in this study, is useful to cross-validate research data from multiple sources to curb researcher bias (Agide&Shakibazadeh, 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Data were primarily collected by interviewing participants using open-ended interview questions. Open-ended interview questions are often useful in gaining in-depth knowledge because they offer the participant the opportunity to address the questions in a broad manner (Agide&Shakibazadeh, 2018; Yin, 2018). A semi-structured interview format was adopted to create room for asking follow-up questions to collect adequate data and attain data saturation. Interviews were recorded using a computer-mediated virtual conferencing platform for accuracy,then transcribed, and thereafter uploaded into NVivo software for conducting thematic analysis.

Research Participant Information

Five management staff of the selected international airline partnership in the United States were recruited for the study. The inclusionary criteria for selecting participants in this study were: (a) The participant was required to be an employee of the targeted organization, (b) the participant was required to have a minimum of 2 years experience in managing a diverse workforce, and (c) the participant was required to be affiliated with the organization's employee excellence recognition program (The Chairman's Club). The professional social network, LinkedIn, was used to gain access to participants. Emails with attachments explaining the background and focus of the study were sent along with consent forms to candidates to create the opportunity to make informed decisions. For privacy and confidentiality, participants were identified with alphanumerical codes (P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5) instead of using names.

Population and Sampling

The population for this single case study consisted of 20 departmental managers of the ground staff operations of the leading US and international partner airlines in the State of Georgia. The purposive sampling method was used to select five participants for the study. As a non-random method of sampling, purposive selection depends on the judgment of the researcher to institute measures that are likely to enhance the reliability of the participant as a source of information and consequently favors a small number of participants with the required knowledge and depth of experience to fulfill the research objectives (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Another advantage of purposive selection is that researchers can select participants based on significant lived experiences associated with the phenomenon under study (House, 2018; Saunders et al., 2016).

Because of the social distancing requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews were conducted using computer-mediated conferencing tools and scheduled at the convenience of participants (CDC, 2020). The interviews were scheduled and held to ensure confidentiality and to avoid disruptions. The interviews took the form of virtual conferencing sessions.

Data Organization

To keep track, process, and organize research data, in this study, an electronic folder was created to store participants' data regarding (a) consent forms and emails, (b) audio recordings of interviews, (c) transcripts, (d) participant's response summary, (e) interview notes, and personal logs. A list was created on note cards to facilitate the retrieval of thedata collected. The types of data were logged, specifying the dates, times, and places of the collection along with the codes of participants from whom the data was collected. A company folder is maintained, which contains such information as annual reports, diversity management reports, and HR policy documents as secondary data to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon studied. Various technology tools such as Microsoft Office Suite, NVivo, and TranscribeMe™ software were used for appropriate data processing and filing. All documents were labeled and filed appropriately, which facilitated retrieval and analysis of the study data.

Data Analysis

The primary data for this study were collectedusingsemistructured interviews with business leaders managing diverse workforce departments. Relevant company documents such as human resource management policy documents, diverse workforce management policies, and airline annual reports were analyzed as secondary data to triangulate against primary research data. The use of multiple sources of evidence in research facilitated the gathering of rich and thick data to answer the research question (Yin, 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). By cross-validating information from various sources along with the interview, data made it possible to achieve data saturation, mitigate researcher/participant bias, and ensure the credibility, validity, and reliability of the research findings (Belotto, 2018; Yin, 2018). Using the case study design in this research study, data triangulation made it possible to fulfill the primary case study goal of gaining an in-depth knowledge of the subject under study.

The interview data were transcribed and uploaded into the NVivo qualitative research software for analysis, using a systematic process of data reduction and constant comparison, resulting in the emergence of three major themes conveyed in the most frequent perspectives expressed during the interviews. The data collected were initially analyzed and later triangulated against secondary data such as airline industry reports and peer-reviewed publications, leading to the three emergent themes, namely (a) diversity and inclusion, (b) SHRM, and (c) proactive leadership. The data analysis process involved a comprehensive process of comparing interview notes, interview transcripts, and triangulation against airline industry reports and other sources of credible information to ensure an enhanced level of validity and reliability.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question for the study was: "What strategies do international airline alliance leaders use to manage a diverse workforce to ensure sustainability and profitability?" The views of five U.S.-based international airline alliance leaders in ground staff operations regarding strategies to manage a diverse workforce included diversity and inclusion, SHRM, and leadership. The interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions to enable the participants to provide in-depth information about diverse workforce management.

Theme 1: Diversity and Inclusion

The most frequent theme that emerged from the responses to the interviews question, after analysis of the transcripts, was diversity and inclusion. P1 intimated that a diverse workforce in an international airline partnership environment brings about mutual respect, accommodation, and creates the need to include culturally sensitive oral and non-verbal communication in the workplace. Ensuring inclusion in an international airline alliance workplace generates cohesion in the workforce that could enhance sustainability and profitability.

P3 affirmed that diversity initiatives should encourage a broader approach to policyformulation. We have people with diverse cultural backgrounds, in multinational organizations. So, you see that in policy formulations, it will be broad-based to cater to all interests, very inclusive policy formulation processes, leading to a policy that would cater to the interests. P4 said, "So you have to make sure that you are creating an intentional pipeline that will consistently supply fresh diverse talent into your pool." P5 noted,

> I think it starts at the very beginning with recruitment. Recruiting an ever more diverse group of people in the workforce. And so, I think the more diversity we can have in the staff and the more that we can address some of those expanded ways in which people are different will be helpful.

The qualitative analytical software NVivo generated the word cloud below, which shows the dominant views participants expressed during the research interviews (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Word Density Cloud Depicting Participants' Responses to the Interview Questions

The views expressed during the interviews regarding diversity and inclusion involved perspectives on cultural awareness, cultural intelligence, emotional intelligence, understanding, familiarity, cultural sensitivity, and variation of traditional roles. All participants were of the view that diversity training programs involving encouraging employees to work on their biases and blinders help develop cultural sensitivity. The participants emphasized the need to diversify corporate boards, management teams, and recruitment committees to show commitment to diversity and inclusion. Socialization through company-sponsored programs to showcase cultural and group-specific programs could help create cultural awareness. Participants recommended the use of workplace diversity and the inclusion of reporting metrics such as diversity scorecards, dashboards, and annual culture surveys.

Study Findings through the Lens of the TFL Theory

The research data analysis revealed that participants emphasized the importance for U.S.-based international airline alliance leaders in ground staff operations to be intentional and proactive in the execution of strategies to ensure organizational performance, profitability, and sustainability. The themes that emerged in the data analysis were related to literature and contextualized in the TFL theory and diverse workforce management framework as the lens guiding the study. TFL is considered a critical success factor in the global supply chain environment because transformational leaders are likely to leverage strong empowering influence on their teams, secure stakeholders' engagement, and deliver performance beyond expectations (Zaman, 2020).

The usefulness of TFL to diverse workforce management was established in the review of the professional and academic literature in terms of high-performance work systems, increased cohesion, commitment, motivation, and trust. Under holistic analysis, I identified and discussed the themes within the framework of TFL and kept diverse workforce management in perspective as an organizational imperative within an international airline strategic alliance.

The essential role of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) in organizing a diverse workforce is replete in current literature. Wawryszuk-Misztal (2021) argued that there is a relationship between DEI and meaningful individual and organizational outcomes. Both employees and companies could benefit from diverse workforce management strategies in terms of organizational climate and organizational performance. Stazyk et al., (2021) noted that diversity management may bear on organizational goal clarity, employee job satisfaction, and organizational competitive advantage. Career planning and career advancement of women and other minorities are likely to thrive in a workplace where SHRM promotes DEI (Brown et al., 2021). In the globalized business environment, instituting SHRM measures to ensure diversity and inclusion could often play a significant role in gaining a competitive advantage.

Applications to Professional Practice

The study findings could be beneficial to international corporate partnerships, as would expectedly be useful to corporate leaders, training professionals, and international partnership managers, in advancing the understanding that diverse workforce management strategies in international partnership environments may contribute to business sustainability and competitive advantage. A personal view is that business leaders may gain new and better perspectives regarding the role of diverse workforce management in business profitability and sustainability. U.S.-based international airline alliance leaders in ground staff operations in addition may be able to determine strategies that could cohere the strategic alliance workforce into high-performance work practices leading to business profitability and sustainability. Burns and Ulrich (2016) noted that organizations that have diverse, inclusive, and talent management strategies appear to gain a competitive advantage over competitors on both talent and financial outcomes. The importance of ensuring cohesion among employees with diversity strategies is underscored by Ardakani et al., (2016) in suggesting that diverse workforce management is an issue of organizational justice. Adopting the SHRM approach to manage the human capital of an international airline strategic alliance is, thus, an SCA initiative to ensure that the organization achieves success through the employees by matching human capital policies to organizational strategy.

Strategic Recommendations

There is a compelling case for hiring culturally diverse, gender diverse, age-diverse, and linguistically diverse staff in international airline strategic alliances. The study findings and the knowledge presented, may serve to create awareness of the importance of diversity in the ground staff operations of a global airline strategic alliance. The understanding of organizational performance and business sustainability will require some specific actions and recommendations which are presented herewith.

The Value of Institutional Buy-In

Implementing diverse workforce management strategies is likely to be more effective in an organization where there is institutional buy-in into pursuing diversity and inclusion. This buy-in ostensibly means the company's leadership, including the board and management team, would have discussed this issue, and based on the stakes in the business operations, decided firmly, that adopting diversity and inclusion policies could create the synergy that is likely to enhance profitability and sustainability. The institutional buy-in will need to filter into consensus-building regarding vision and mission

statements as well as other relevant policies. Essentially, it may be beneficial if the institutional buy-in results in diversifying the composition of the corporate board and the management teams.

The Scope for Further Research

As diversity has cultural significance, it may be helpful to conduct a similar study from a different cultural milieu such as the European-based international airline alliance context. Such a study may unearth some nuances that may expand the knowledge regarding diverse workforce management strategies in the international airline strategic alliance environment. A quantitative study may have a far greater sample and, therefore, may yield additional findings to those in this study.

Conclusion

International airlines operating in strategic alliances could benefit from economies of scale, access to international markets, and globally integrated transportation services. Other perks of airline international alliance include joint sales and marketing coordination, co-location of airport facilities, reciprocal code sharing, reciprocal loyalty programs participation, airport lounge access, airport ground handling arrangements, aircraft maintenance insourcing, and joint procurement scale. Supporting global air transport operations requires adequate staffing to map to the diverse workforce requirements of multinational corporations. While a diverse workforce is a business imperative in 21st-century international business, there is a need to adopt effective workforce management strategies to ensure profitability and sustainability. The three strategies that emerged in this study are diversity and inclusion, strategic human resources management, and leadership. These strategies need to be pursued intentionally and proactively for effectiveness.

References

Agide, F.D., &Shakibazadeh, E. (2018). Discourses on sexuality and sexual health perspectives among Wachemo University students, Ethiopia: A qualitative study. *Ethiopian Journal of Health Sciences*, *28*(5), 599–606. https://doi.org/10.4314/ejhs.v28i5.11

Alexander, V., Havercome, C., & Mujtaba, B. G. (2015). Effectively managing employees to get results in a diverse workplace such as American Express. *Journal of Business Studies Quarterly*, *7*, 13-26. https://jbsq.org/

Amina, R.M., & Singh, P. (2017). Transformational leadership and cultural minorities: A conceptual model. *European Business Review*, *29*(5), 500-514. https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-12-2015-0181

Ardakani, M.S., Abzari, M., Shaemi, A., &Fathi, S. (2016).Mediating effects of perceived organizational attractiveness, organizational justice, and social identity in Isfahan's steel industry. *Diversity Management and Iranian Journal of Management Studies,9*, 407-432. https://ijms.ut.ac.ir/ human

Belotto, M. J. (2018). Data analysis methods for qualitative research: Managing the challenges of coding, interrater reliability, and thematic analysis. *Qualitative Report*, *23*(11), 2622–2633.https://tqr.nova.edu/

Bilotkach, V. (2019). Airline partnerships, antitrust immunity, and joint ventures: What we know and what I think we would like to know. *Review of Industrial Organization*, *54*(1), 37-60. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11151-018-9636-x

Bortoluzzi, G., Kadic-Maglajlic, S., Arslanagic-Kalajdzic, M., &Balboni, B. (2018). Innovativeness as a driver of the international expansion of developing markets' firms. *International Marketing Review*, *35*(2), 215-235. https://doi.org/10.1108/IMR-11-2015-0258

Brown, L.R., Lao, T., & Michael-Chadwell, S. (2021). A quantitative correlational study on diversity management, career planning, and career advancement for women. *The Journal of Business Diversity, 21*(2), 143-169 https://www.sciencegate.app/source/329064

Burch, T.R., Emery, D.R., &Fuerst, M.E. (2016). Who moves markets in a sudden marketwide crisis? Evidence from 9/11. *Journal of Financial and Quantitative Analysis*, *51*, 463-487. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022109016000211

Burns, E. W., & Ulrich, D. (2016). The evolving diversity agenda. *Strategic HR Review, 15*, 220–225. https://doi.org/doi:10.1108/SHR-08-2016-0065

Byrd, M.Y., & Scott, C.L. (2018). Diversity in the Workforce. https://doi.org/doi:10.4324/9781315188980

Carrizales, T., Zahradnik, A., & Silverio, M. (2016). Organizational advocacy of cultural competency initiatives: Lessons for public administration. *Public Administration Quarterly, 40*(1), 126-155. https://www.questia.com/library/p61373/public

CDC. (2020). Guidance for general laboratory safety practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/lab-safety

Clark, K.R. (2017). Managing multiple generations in the workplace. *Radiologic Technology*, *88*, 379 – 398. https://www.ncbi.nih.gov

Crabb, J. (2020). Covid-19 illuminates corporate buyback issues. *International Financial Law Review*. https://www.iflr.com/

Daniels, S., & Thornton, L. M. (2019). Race and workplace discrimination. *Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion: An International Journal, 39(3), 319-335.* https://doi.org/:10.1108/EDI-06-2018-0105

Frazier, L.D. (2018). *A critical perspective of transformational leadership and safety management practices* (Order No. 10824283). Available from Dissertations & Theses at Walden University; ProQuest Central; ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (2049659271).https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/critical-perspective-transformational-leadership/docview/2049659271/se2?accountid=14872/ perspective-transformational-leadership/ docview/ 20496 59271/ se-?accountid=14872

Groves, C. (2019). Sustainability and the future: Reflections on the ethical and political significance of sustainability. *Sustainability Science, 14*(4), 915-924. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-019-00700-0

House, J. J. (2018). Authentic vs elicited data and qualitative vs quantitative research methods in pragmatics: Overcoming two non-fruitful dichotomies. *System*, *7*(4), 12. https://doi.org/1016/j.system.2018.03.014

Jajja, M.,Kannan, V.,Brah, S.and Hassan, S.(2017). Linkages between firm innovation strategy, suppliers, product innovation, and business performance: Insights from resource dependence theory.*InternationalJournalof Operations &Production Management,37*(8), 1054-1075. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOPM-09-2014-0424

Karadjova-Stoev, G., &Mujtaba, B. G. (2016). Strategic human resource management and global expansion lessons from the Euro Disney challenges in France. *The International Business & Economics Research Journal,15*(79). https://doi.org/10.19030/iber.v15i3.9672

Kundu, S.C., Bansal, J., &Pruthi, M. (2019). Perceived workforce diversity and firm performance: A study of an Indian public sector organization. *Journal of Strategic Human Resource Management, 8*(1), 47-60. https://journals.indexcopernicus.com/search/details?id=31788

Kuznetsova, N.V. (2016). Strategic alliances: Industry-specific characteristics of the achievement of a competitive advantage. *International Journal of Economics and Financial Issues, 6*(1).https://econjournals.com/index.php/ijefi

Mahsud, R., Imanaka., J. L., & Prussia, G., (2018). Authenticity in business sustainability: Overcoming limitations in strategic management constructs. *Sustainability Accounting, Management and Policy Journal, 9*(5), 666-684. https://doi.org/10.1108/SAMPJ-02-2018-0036

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2016). *Designing qualitative research*. Sage Publications.

Mohajan, H.K. (2018). Qualitative research methodology in social sciences and related subjects. *Journal of Economic Development, Environment, and People, 7*(1), 23. https://doi.org/10.26458/jedep.v7i1.571

Mokhber, M., Ismail, W. K., &Vakilbashi, A. (2015). Effect of transformational leadership and its components on organizational innovation. *Iranian Journal of Management Studies, 8*, 221-241. https://ijms.ut.ac.ir/

Nickerson, C., & Valerie, P.G. (2018). Convergence and collaboration: Co-creating meaning within culturally diverse workforces. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis, 26*(5), 941-952. https://doi:10.1108/IJOA-03-2018-1390

Saunders, M.N.K., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2016). *Research methods for business students*. (7th ed.). Pearson Education Limited

Schreier, C., Udomkit, N., & Capone, R. (2019). A study on competencies for managing workforce diversity: Evidence from multi-national enterprises in Switzerland. *ABAC Journal, 39*(3), 1-16. https://www.assumptionjournal.au.edu/index.php/abacjournal/index

Seo, G.-H. (2020). Competitive advantages of international airline alliances: A critical review. *HOLISTICA – Journal of Business and Public Administration, 11*(1), 139–145. https://doi.org/10.2478/hjbpa-2020-0012

Silvestre, W. J., Antunes, P., & Walter, L. F. (2018). The corporate sustainability typology: Analyzing sustainability drivers and fostering sustainability at enterprises. *Technological and Economic Development of Economy, 24*(2), 513–533. https://doi.org/10.3846/20294913.2016.1213199

Stazyk, E.C., Davis, R.S., & Liang, J. (2021). Probing the links between workforce diversity, goal clarity, and employee job satisfaction in public sector organizations. *Administrative Sciences, 11*(3), 77. https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci11030077

Subramanian, R. (2017). Competing through strategic networks: The ebbs and flows of a dynamic system. *International Journal of Business, 22*, 305-318. https://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ijbm

Teng, B., Das, T.K. (2008). Governance structure choice in strategic alliances. *Management Decision, 46*(5), 725 – 742. https://doi.org/10.1108/00251740810873482

Vogt, M., & Weber, C. (2019). Current challenges to the concept of sustainability. *Global Sustainability, 2*.https://doi.org/10.1017/sus.2019.1

Vokoun, M., Caha, Z., Straková, J., Stellner, F., &Váchal, J. (2018). The strategic importance of human resources management and the roles of human capital investment and education. *Scientific Papers of the University of Pardubice. Series D. Faculty of Economics and Administration*, (42). https://fes.upce.cz/en/fea/research-development/scientific-journals/scipap.html

Wawryszuk-Misztal, A. (2021). Determinants of board diversity policy implementation by companies listed on the Warsaw stock exchange. *Equilibrium, 16*(3), 617-637. https://doi.org/10.24136/eq.2021.022

Wei, Y. (2018). Airline networks, traffic densities, and value of links. *Quantitative Marketing and Economics, 16*(3), 341-370. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11129-018-9197-1

Winata, L., Mia, L., &Langmann, C. (2016). Strategic alliance, information and communication technology, and customer-related performance: The role of industry characteristics. *Contemporary Management Research, 12*(3), 337-362. https://doi.org/10.7903/cmr.14385

Yin, R.K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Sage Publications.

Yoder, S., Visich, J.K., Rustambekov, E. (2016). Lessons learned from international expansion failures and successes. *Business Horizons, 59*(2). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2015.11.008

Zaman, U. (2020).Examining the effect of xenophobia on "transnational" mega construction project (MCP) success: Moderating role of transformational leadership and high-performance work (HPW) practices. *Engineering, Construction, and Architectural Management, 27*(5), 1119-1143. https://doi.org:10.1108/ECAM-05-2019-0227