A STUDY ON MARITAL STATUS AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE: A DE&I PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Most organisations attempt to establish an inclusive environment for people with varied characteristics such as race, ethnicity, religion, handicap, gender, and sexual orientation. DE&I is an acronym that refers to the three values that most modern organisations want to promote to cater for the needs of the diverse population. It means that sustaining DE&I initiatives can help organisations be more adaptable to change, get competitive access to the best candidates, and serve diverse customers and markets. Concerning DE&I, organisations have asked themselves how much they are prepared to support employees. This research paper aims to analyse the impact of marital status on women's employment prospects in the workplace with a special reference to diversity, equity, and inclusion. This study will help us understand how gender and marital status, which are frequently overlooked as aspects of identity, influence women's job advancement. Using the concept of intersectionality, the study analyses the various challenges that women face depending on their marital status: single, married, divorced, or widow. The research of this paper is based on the results of the survey conducted among 200 women of different ages, either studying or working in different industries and holding various positions, to identify patterns and tendencies of the relationship between marital status and employment consequences. The study also explores the single, divorced and widowed women who may experience various forms of discrimination and prejudice at the workplace. The paper concludes by providing a set of suggestions for organisations to encourage better representation and fair treatment of women of different marital statuses. The present study is based on primary data; the researcher has collected data from respondents through a structured questionnaire. The sample size for the present study was 200 respondents, and a combination of convenience & snowball sampling methods was used for the study.

Keywords: Marital Status, Intersectionality, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Workplace.

INTRODUCTION

The approach to managing organisations today has evolved from the traditional management perspective to accommodate DE&I with an emphasis on minority groups. When organisations take an interest in DE&I activities, it becomes evident that they tackle discrimination, respect, and organisational effectiveness in corporations. DE&I is no longer a mandate of doing the right thing for the good of marginalised communities. However, it is a survival tool in today's globally connected business environment. Businesses that commit to DE&I activities will be able to efficiently source for and manage the best employees while also developing positive relationships with customers, investors, and a variety of other stakeholders, as well as driving innovation. The implementation of DE&I values within an organisation can improve the company's image, increase employee productivity, and subsequently enhance the company's financial condition. While managing diversity, equity and inclusion, organisations have to follow practical DE&I approaches that can support organisational objectives. The recognition of DE&I as a critical component of organisational growth supports its strategic importance as a fundamental factor influencing organisational sustainability and competitiveness.

Companies today are being judged based not only on financial returns but also on factors such as DE&I. Organisations are evaluated for their effectiveness to cater for the demographic characteristics of individuals at various career levels, in diverse positions, as well as across regions. In this regard, the focus on DE&I is appropriate for transforming consumers who make purchase decisions based on firms' true social responsibility and ethical standards. Research shows that organisations with a clear DE&I objective enjoy significant advantages: customers are four times more likely to purchase from that company, six times more likely to come to its defense even with negative criticism, five times more likely to endorse that company to other people and finally four times more likely to have confidence in that company. Therefore, it is for this reason that the pursuit of DE&I efforts not only benefits an organisation in terms of image but also ultimately in terms of customers, sales, and stock price in the modern socially-conscious business environment.

The adoption of DE&I policies and practices in organisations is a business imperative for organisations that have aimed at promoting a diverse, productive, creative and innovative organisational culture. Choosing DE&I means that businesses gain a range of values that ultimately contribute to the organisation's success and growth. Managing a diverse workforce is a good way to gather professionals with different backgrounds and

experiences, and thus, it can develop creativity and improve problem-solving skills. Diversity management seeks to incorporate everyone into the processes, where all opinions are respected and taken into account, hence making it much more efficient and effective. This diversity of thought and inclusive approach drives innovation, as evidenced by studies showing that gender-diverse companies innovate faster and that culturally diverse companies introduce new products to the market more quickly. However, one cannot undermine the effectiveness of DE&I promotion as a great talent attraction and retention tool. The young generation of employees, like Gen Z, look for organisations' policies that are fair and equal as well as an organisation that will make them feel they belong there. In this way, creating a tolerant organisational culture allows for a decrease in the rate of turnover and keeps the efficient employees in the company. (Radancy, 2024) Apart from the ethical reasons, DE&I is a must-adopt organisational strategy. A diverse company is profitable, and employees in ethnically and gender-diverse companies are 39% more likely to outperform their counterparts in other companies. This has not only improved the level of satisfaction among the employees, but also their efficiency, cooperation, management skills, innovation and organisational adaptability. (Quantive, 2024) However, modern businesses cannot consider DE&I solely as an obligation but would instead view it as an opportunity to gain a competitive edge. Thus, DE&I can be perceived not just as a set of principles for managing ethnic, cultural, gender, and other differences but also as an effective tool for developing a successful strategy and encouraging growth and change in an organisation's work environment in an era of globalisation and diversity.

DE&I refers to the intentional and ongoing effort to create an environment where all individuals, regardless of their background, identity, or characteristics, feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and talents. DE&I is not just about numbers or statistics but about creating a culture that is inclusive, equitable, and just. It involves recognising and addressing the systemic and structural barriers that prevent certain groups from fully participating and thriving and working to create a more equitable and just society. DE&I is not a one-time event or a single initiative but a continuous process that requires ongoing effort, commitment, and engagement from all stakeholders.

Intersectionality is the social justice concept that studies how multiple forms of identity – including but not limited to race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability can produce different experiences of power for an individual. Proposed by Kimberlé Crenshaw towards the end of the 1980s, intersectionality means that the discriminated person cannot be discriminated against based on one aspect of his or her persona but is discriminated against based on the interaction of these aspects. This approach sheds light on the limitations of conventional assessments that rarely capture the complexity of the problems that vulnerable groups experience. For example, while equality may be defined differently for women and men, the Black woman may struggle with discrimination in a manner the Black man or the white women would unlikely experience. Using intersectional analysis, scholars and activists could identify structural discrimination at work, which is still prevalent in modern society, and defend a program that meets the diverse needs of individuals. Finally, intersectionality becomes an important tool in the pursuit of social justice and equality across multiple areas. (Gary Goertz, 2008)

REVIEW OF LITERATURE
For the present study, the researcher reviewed various published journals, research articles, & books that were related to DE&I.

"The Importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Orthopaedic Research" by **Tamara Alliston et al. (2020)** acts as a background for the paper as it demonstrates the relevance of DE&I practices in the orthopaedic research field. The authors argue that diverse teams work more efficiently and can introduce innovations that would ultimately improve patients' care. They note that, currently, women and racial and ethnic minorities are particularly scarce; although there has been some improvement in women, issues of racial and ethnic representation still prove to be a concern. Based on the authors' work, some of the issues affecting underrepresented minorities' progression in orthopaedics are a scarcity of role models as well as uplifts and increased attrition in residency among underrepresented minorities (URMs). Such systemic problems explain why more specific approaches are required. The article also implores academic institutions and journals to elevate DE&I, proposing the funding and implementation of successful mentorship and policies for marginalized people. Besides, by focusing on continued investigation of DE&I practices and impacts on orthopaedic results, the authors claim that the improvement of DE&I is an ethical imperative as well as the necessity to provide higher-quality health care. The idea of this approach is to make the community within the field of orthopaedics more diverse and less prejudiced in any way. Thus, the paper by Alliston et al. (2020) highlights the insufficiency of DE&I in orthopaedic studies and the necessity of its improvement. This is a

positive step their request for academic institutions and journals for increased DE&I through promotions and supportive policies for the needy will help create this environment thus improving healthcare delivery systems for diverse communities.

"Is there a glass ceiling or can racial and ethnic barriers be overcome? A study on leadership positions in professional Belgian football among African coaches" by Chris Heim, Joris Corthouts & Jeroen Scheerder (2020) looks at the current state of African coaches in the leadership positions in professional football in Belgium. The research also looks at the role that racism and ethnicity play as causes of the lack of representation of these coaches at the managerial level. Carrying out qualitative and quantitative analysis, the authors investigate the experiences of African coaches, evaluating the possibility of the barriers' elimination and the presence of 'the glass ceiling'. Therefore, it is recommended to initiate specific measures and reforms to increase the representation of women and people of colour in positions of authority in the field of coaching in Belgian football.

Ghada Barsoum (2018), this research article explains how educated women in Egypt make their employment choices due to the constraints of social culture, lack of child care and weak protection by law. Based on the study, it suggests increasing gender-sustainable norms, increasing accessible childcare, improving legal frameworks, encouraging flexible working conditions, and increasing the training in skills to increase the rate of women's employment and to support gender equality in the workplace. (Barsoum, 2018)

Ellen Ernst Kossek & Patrice M. Buzzanell (2018), this paper mainly examines the challenges facing the equality of women and their leadership advancement in organisations. The research aims to understand the systematic barriers to women's promotion, to investigate the part of organisational culture and practices, to discuss the findings and to conclude the effective practices for women's leadership. Sexism, unsupportive management and the absence of role models and other policies that support working mothers contribute to the slow rate at which women are promoted. Thus, the authors suggest that organisations should adopt potential work arrangements supported by sound organisational policies which also entail encouragements to mentorship and diversity training. They stress on the organisational leadership support for gender equality and the use of metrics to track and predict gender change for women's career advancement and leadership pipeline. (Buzzanell, 2018)

The research article **'Women and Work around the World'** by **Abigail M. Folberg** (2020) offers insights into the various opportunities as well as hurdles that women face in and through work across various cultures and economies. The main research questions are as follows: What are global trends, cultural values, and institutional policies govern women's employment and career advancement? What practices foster gender equity in the workplace? According to research, as women enter the workforce around the world, they confront distinct problems such as gender bias in the workplace, income disparities, and limited promotion opportunities. The article also stresses the need to ensure that solutions to the problems are relevant in the respective countries, this is expected to consider models that have been effective in increasing women's employment across different countries. Recommendations also embrace institutions of favourable working conditions like flex time and maternal/father`s leave among others, ventures that seek to alter community perception about women's work. As a result, establishing equal opportunities for women in the workplace can help them advance in their careers and contribute to overall economic development. (Folberg, 2020)

Female conservation leaders' experiences are discussed in the article entitled **"Challenges and Support for Women Conservation Leaders"** by **Megan S. Jones and Jennifer Solomon (2019)**. The study investigates several concerns, including salary discrimination, sexual harassment, and informal exclusion, all of which are exacerbated by race and/or age differences. Research findings show that all the interviewed women described various gendered barriers at their workplace. The authors suggest the adoption of gendered organizational practices in the form of mentorship, training against bias, and women-supportive networks in a bid to improve women's leadership in the conservation of natural resources. Thus, this study shows the necessity to enhance the conservation results and ensure an environment where a range of stakeholders feel welcome. (Solomon, 2019)

The article " **Feminist Ideologies at Work: Culture, Collectivism, and Entrepreneurship among Disadvantaged Women in India"** by **Punita Bhatt & Supriya Garikipati (2024)**, the research intends to reveal the impact of feminism in forming women's entrepreneurship and the equipment that enables them. Primary conclusions indicate that although collectivist values ensure community support, they also perpetuate patriarchy that constrains women's decision-making. The authors propose the adoption of the following policies to advance women's entrepreneurship, business resources and training and change cultural attitudes. This way,

the study promotes an inclusiveness that aims at effectively improving the economic status of disadvantaged women in India. (Garikipati, 2024)

LIMITATION
The results of this study must be carefully examined because of its limitations. The study could, therefore, be prone to the following limitations;

- While the survey includes 107 women from various industries and positions, the findings may not be generalisable to all women in the workforce.

- The study relies on self-reported data from participants, which may be subject to biases and inaccuracies.

OBJECTIVES:
1. To investigate the relationship between marital status and employment opportunities for women in the workplace.

2. To ascertain the specific problems that women of various marital statuses encounter and how they combine with other aspects of their identities.

3. To provide recommendations for organisations to promote more inclusive and equitable practices that recognise the diverse experiences and needs of women across marital statuses.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY
1. **$H0_1$:** There is no association between women's marital status (single, married, divorced, widowed) and their rate of employment.

2. **$H0_2$:** There is no significant difference in perceived workplace discrimination levels among women of different marital statuses.

3. **$H0_3$:** There is no association between pregnancy announcement and negative changes in employment status.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
A strong research methodology is necessary to reduce errors in data collection and analysis. This is why the researcher chose to collect his data through structured questionnaires. The following table provides information:

| Type of Data	Primary & Secondary
Sampling Method	Convenience & Snowball Sampling
Sample size	107 Respondents
Research tool	Structured Questionnaire
Research Method	Descriptive
Data Collection method	Survey
Tools to analyse data	Chi-square, One-Way Anova for Hypotheses Testing, Data Tab, Ms Excel, Descriptive Statistics, Graphical presentation.

ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION OF DATA & FINDINGS
Tables and graphical representations were used to analyse the collected data and come to the appropriate conclusions and interpretations.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS: (N=107 RESPONDENTS)

CHART 1: GENDER OF RESPONDENTS

Interpretation: The data indicates that 91.6% of the respondents are female, while 8.41% are male, reflecting a higher representation of females in the sample.
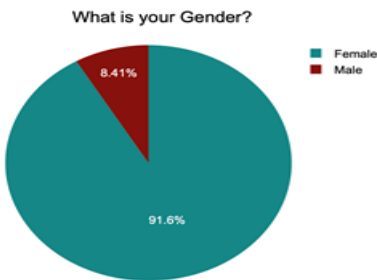
Source: By Researcher

## CHART 2: AGE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Interpretation: The bar diagram reveals a skewed age distribution, with 52 respondents in the 18-24 age group, indicating a significant bias towards younger participants in the survey, followed by 35, 13, 5 & 2 in the 25-35, 35-44, 45-54 & 55 or above age group respectively.
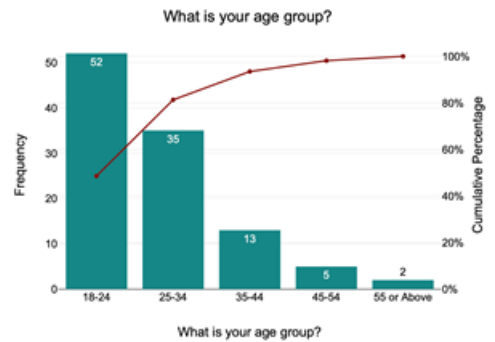
Source: By Researcher

CHART 3: EDUCATION LEVEL

Interpretation: The bar chart indicates that the majority of respondents (38.32%) hold a Bachelor's degree, followed by Master's degrees (35.51%), High School diplomas (12.15%), Doctorates (6.54%), and Diplomas/Associates (5.61%).
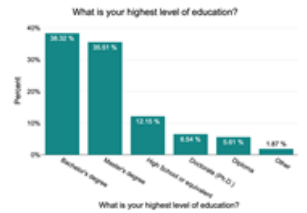

Source: By Researcher

CHART 4: CURRENT POSITION IN THE COMPANY

Interpretation: The bar graph illustrates the distribution of employees across different positions within a company, revealing a steep decline in frequency from entry-level (51 employees) to management (2 employees). This suggests a hierarchical structure with a large base of junior staff, indicating potential growth or career development considerations.


Source: By Researcher

CHART 5: TENURE IN CURRENT ROLE
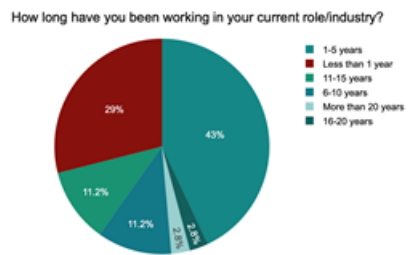
Interpretation: The pie chart reveals that the largest segment of respondents (43%) have been working in their current role/industry for 1-5 years, suggesting a relatively young workforce or a dynamic industry with frequent turnover. Following this, 29% have less than 1 year of experience, indicating a significant portion of new

entrants. The remaining segments, 6-10 years and 11-15 years, both represent 11.2% of respondents, while those with more than 20 years and 16-20 years of experience each account for 2.8%, highlighting a smaller proportion of long-tenured individuals.

CHART 6: MARITAL STATUS
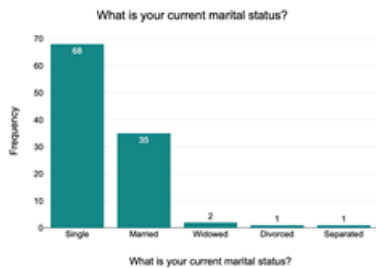
Interpretation: The bar chart illustrates the distribution of marital statuses among the surveyed population, revealing a significant skew towards single individuals (68 respondents), followed by a notable proportion of married individuals (35 respondents). The categories of widowed, divorced, and separated each represent a very small fraction of the respondents, with 2, 1, and 1 individuals respectively, indicating a low prevalence of these marital statuses within the sample.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS TESTING RESULTS

TABLE 1: MARITAL STATUS AND EMPLOYEMENT

Relationship Tested	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Calculated χ^2 Value	Critical Value (α = 0.05)	Decision (α = 0.05)
Single vs Employed	4	**50.58**	**9.49**	**Reject H₀**
Single vs Unemployed	4	**18.18**	**9.49**	**Reject H₀**
Married vs Employed	4	**18.18**	**9.49**	**Reject H₀**
Unmarried vs Unemployed	4	**17.18**	**9.49**	**Reject H₀**
Divorced vs Employed	4	**1.18**	**9.49**	**Accept H₀**
Divorced vs Unemployed	4	**0.18**	**9.49**	**Accept H₀**
Widowed vs Employed	4	**1.18**	**9.49**	**Accept H₀**
Widowed vs Unemployed	4	**1.18**	**9.49**	**Accept H₀**
Separated vs Employed	4	**1.18**	**9.49**	**Accept H₀**
Separated vs Unemployed	4	**0.18**	**9.49**	**Accept H₀**

Interpretation:

Single vs Employed: The calculated chi-square value (50.58) exceeds the critical value (9.49). Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis at α = 0.05. This suggests there is a significant association between being single and employment status.

Single vs Unemployed: The calculated chi-square value (18.18) exceeds the critical value (9.49). Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis at α = 0.05. This indicates a significant relationship between being single and unemployment.

Married vs Employed: The calculated chi-square value (18.18) exceeds the critical value (9.49). Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis at α = 0.05. This suggests there is a significant association between being married and employment status.

Unmarried vs Unemployed: The calculated chi-square value (17.18) exceeds the critical value (9.49). Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis at α = 0.05. This indicates a significant relationship between being unmarried and unemployment.

Divorced, Widowed, and Separated categories: For all these categories (both employed and unemployed relationships), the calculated chi-square values (ranging from 0.18 to 1.18) are lower than the critical value (9.49). Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis at α = 0.05. This suggests that there is no significant association between these marital statuses and employment/unemployment status.

The chi-square analysis reveals that being single or married has a significant relationship with employment status, while being divorced, widowed, or separated does not show a statistically significant association with

employment outcomes. This suggests that certain marital statuses (specifically being single or married) may influence employment opportunities for women, while others do not appear to have a significant impact.

TABLE 2: MARITAL STATUS AND DISCRIMINATION

One-Way ANOVA Summary Table for Perceived Workplace Discrimination by Marital Status

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	101.84	4	25.46	0.46	0.76	2.87
Within Groups	1103.20	20	55.16			
Total	1205.04	24				

Interpretation:

Table 2 shows the results of a one-way ANOVA examining differences in perceived workplace discrimination among women of different marital statuses. The analysis revealed no statistically significant differences between the groups, $F(4, 20) = 0.46$, $p = 0.76$.

TABLE 3: MARITAL STATUS AND DISCRIMINATION

Relationship Tested	df	Calculated Value (χ^2)	Critical Value ($\alpha = 0.05$)	Decision
Marital Status × Negative Employment Changes Due to Pregnancy	4	1.26	9.49	Fail to reject the null hypothesis

Interpretation:

The calculated chi-square value (1.26) is less than the critical value (9.49), therefore, the researcher was fail to reject the null hypothesis. This means there is no statistically significant association between marital status and negative changes in employment status due to pregnancy in this sample.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In this research, the themes of gender, marital status and workplace relations add to the body of knowledge available on the subject. Applying the intersectional analysis, the study draws attention to the distinct experiences of married, single, divorced and widowed women as well as to how these experiences are connected with other aspects of women's subjectivities. The results of this study are significant for organisations which may be interested in encouraging fair treatment of women in the workplace by acknowledging their specific assault needs. The recommendations given in the study could prove useful to organisations to enhance female policies and other endeavours that exist in organisations and society at large to eradicate discrimination based on marital status.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals the subtle relationship of marital status and employment opportunities for women, which shows that while single and married women associate greatly with employment outcomes, divorced, widowed, and separated women do not associate likewise. Notably, the research in question found that there were no meaningful differences in the perceived workplace discrimination across all marital statuses, nor any important relationship between pregnancy announcements and the negative employment changes. This result implies women share discriminatory experiences more broadly. These findings highlight how vital it is for organizations to embrace an intersectional strategy regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives because they cannot assume similar workplace experiences for women. Subtle DE&I strategies recognizing women's heterogeneity based on marital status are needed the research highlights while addressing clear as well as subtle systemic barriers. Organizations should develop support strategies that are targeted, policies that are flexible, and bias training that is thorough. This training must acknowledge the ways that marital status intersects with other identity factors as that creates unique professional challenges and opportunities. Ultimately, this study emphasises that in order to include people meaningfully in the workplace, we must move beyond one-size-fits-all approaches as well as embrace the complexity of women's lived experiences, so we can ensure DE&I initiatives are as diverse and multidimensional as the populations they seek to serve and open avenues for future longitudinal and cross-cultural research so as to understand these complex dynamics further.

AREA FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Potential areas for further research on women's experiences in the animation industry:

- Understanding how marital status and career possibilities evolve and the factors that impact them.

- Understanding how marital status affects career chances in diverse cultural situations and societal norms.

- Evaluating the success of diversity, equity, and inclusion programs and their effects on women's employment and job satisfaction.

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