

## WORKFORCE DIVERSITY IN AN ORGANIZATION AND ITS INFLUENCE ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper appraised the relationship between workforce diversity and employee performance in an organization, given the moderating role of organizational culture. Workforce diversity was studied in terms of gender, political orientation and values diversities. While employee performance was measured in terms of time utilization, cost minimization and waste minimization. In the context of organizational culture, the relationship of workforce diversity and employee performance was moderated. Indications observed signify that workforce diversity has strong implications for employee performance. Workforce diversity contributes towards the extent to which an organization is able to harness the benefits offered by the diversity within its workplace. To this end, the paper identifies workforce diversity as a significant precursor to employee performance. In conclusion, the study asserted that workforce diversity has significantly influence on employee performance. Based on that assertion, the paper recommends that organizations in pursuit of employee performance should emphasize on policies and culture of inclusion and leadership style that breeds organizational citizenship behaviour.*

**Keywords: Workforce Diversity, Gender, Political Orientation, Values, Worker Productivity, Employee Performance,**

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### INTRODUCTION

The diversity in the workforce is increasing all over the world. The representation of minorities, women, people of different age groups etc are increasing in organizations, thus changing the workforce makeup of the organizations. Diversity has been defined in various ways with different authors defining diversity by linking it to different dimensions. It has been defined in terms of gender, disability, age, race, ethnicity, religion and national origin (Ezati, 2022). Some extended definitions also include marital status, lifestyle, personality, sexual orientation, language, values, education, beliefs, tenure, economic status and geographical origin (Marshall et al., 2020; Carr in Ng et al., 2022; Demirel & Tüfekçioğlu, 2021; Thomas (2005) in Opara, 2022). Thus diversity can be stated as all the characteristics in which individuals differ in one or the other way (Pandey, 2020). Organizations nowadays not only have a diverse employee base but also have to face a diverse consumer base.

Workforce diversity is about the differences as well as about the similarities among the workforce (Thomas (2005) in Opara, 2022). Workforce diversity is the variety of demographic characteristics that constitute a company's workforce particularly in terms of age, gender, colour, origin, race, culture, disability (Inazu et al., 2021). It comprises of the reality, invisible or invisible, in which people differ (Ehsan, 2021). It is a heterogeneous group of people (Lo Vecchio et al., 2022), who accept, understand, respect and realize each other's differences (Wambui, 2022). It constitutes of the different people that are from different backgrounds that come together on the same platform to work towards a common goal. There are many different dimensions which distinguish one person from another which can be based on culture, religion, age or gender etc. And when these different individuals co-exist in organizations and form the employee base it is termed as workforce diversity. Diversity can bring many benefits that can enrich our lives in different ways (Idris, 2023).

## **OBJECTIVES**

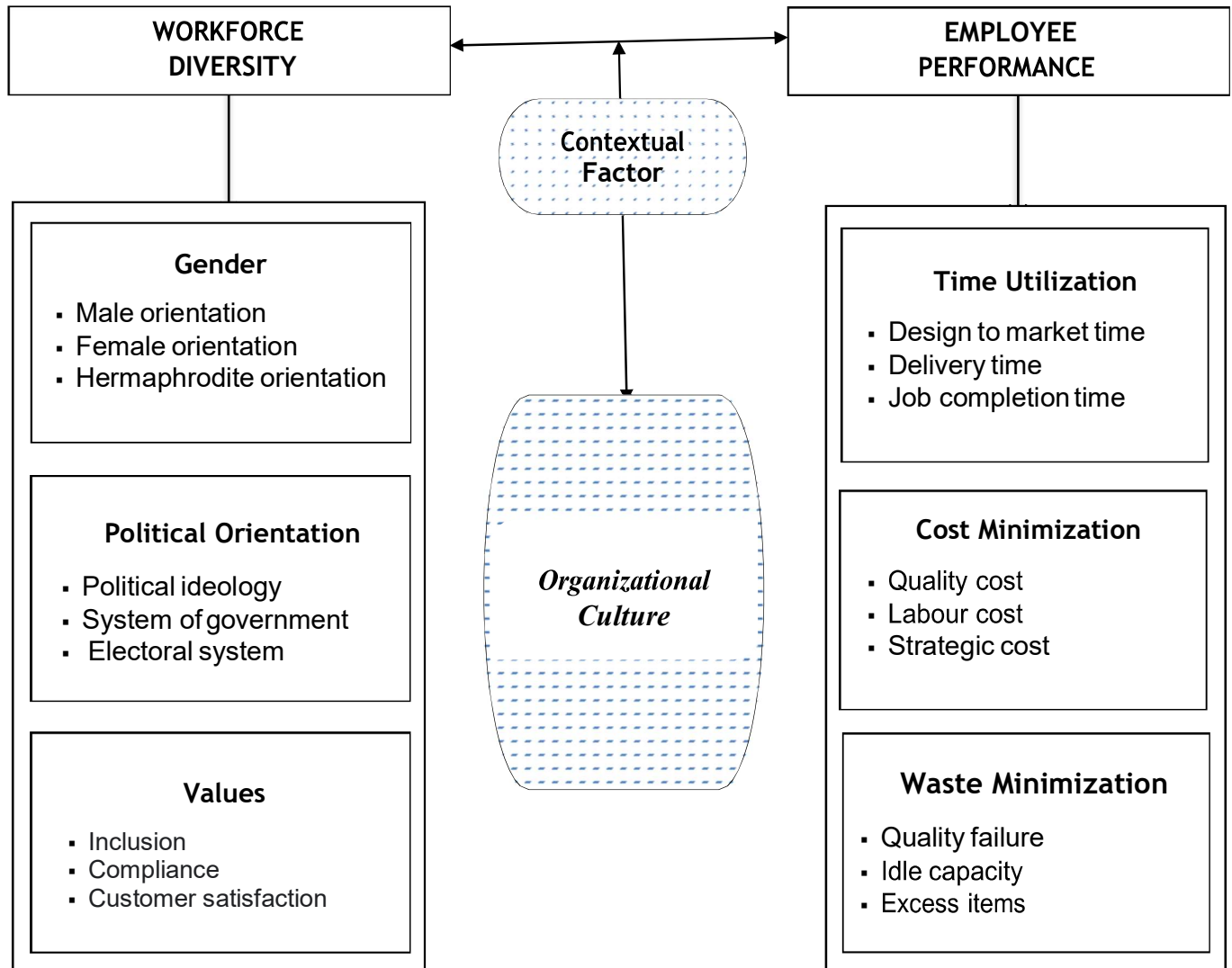
Generally, the purpose of this paper is to study workforce diversity in an organization and its influence on employee performance. Furthermore, the study gave rise to the following specific objectives that are stated hereunder:

1. To ascertain the extent of relationship between gender and employee performance in an organization.
2. To determine the influence of political orientation on employee performance in an organization.
3. To examine the impact of values on employee performance in an organization.
4. To identify whether, or not, organizational culture moderates on the association between workforce diversity and employee performance in an organization.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

In a pictorial representation, conceptualization of workforce diversity and employee performance model portrays the predictor or independent variable \_workforce diversity, with three main referent dimensions of gender, political orientation, and values. Each of the referent dimensions has three indicators pertaining to them. First, gender dimension has male orientation, female orientation, and hermaphrodite orientation to it. Second, political orientation dimension has political ideology, system of government, and electoral system to it. While values dimension has inclusion, compliance, and customer satisfaction to itself. All of the independent variable, three referent dimensions and their indices of information are designated on the left hand side of the conceptual model. On the right hand side, the conceptual model bears the criterion or dependent variable \_employee performance, with three measures of time utilization, cost minimization and waste minimization. Again, each of the measures of employee performance has been assigned three indices of information pertaining to them. First, time utilization as a unit of measure has design to market time, delivery time, and job completion time. Second, cost minimization has quality cost, labour cost, and strategic cost. Last, waste minimization has quality failure, idle capacity, and excess items to itself as indicators. Right in the center of the conceptual model lies organizational culture being adopted as the contextual factor otherwise known as the moderating variable. Organizational culture mediates on the relationship between workforce diversity and employee performance in this paper. In other words, the postulation of the impact of organizational culture catalyzing into worker productivity is subjected to the determination of the factor of organizational culture of the corporate entity. By this model, the study shall assess the extent to which workforce diversity correlates with employee performance, given the mediating variable of organizational culture.

**Conceptual Framework**



**Figure 1.1.** Conceptualization on Workforce Diversity and Employee Performance **Source:** Adapted from Jayawardana & Priyashantha (2019), Opara (2021), and Zeb-Obipi (2022).

**CONCEPTUAL REVIEW**

**Workforce Diversity**

In Abubakar (2022), Childs Jr defined workforce diversity as the degree of heterogeneity among employees that is precisely limited to specific cultural attributes such as: age, class, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, race, economic status, sexual orientation, educational background, marital status, union affiliation, work content, attitudes, morale, beliefs, and interests. Many other scholars have described different dimensions of diversity. Some have divided these dimensions into two categories primary and secondary dimensions. Others have divided them into

three categories primary, secondary and tertiary dimensions. Primary dimensions are the inborn dimensions which are not in control of the person and cannot be altered (Wrench, 2014). Secondary are those which can be changed like religion, marital status, level of education, etc. (Makhdoomi & Nika, 2017). According to Loden & Rosener (in *Ibid.*), dimensions of diversity have been divided into two categories. These are primary dimensions (gender, ethnicity etc.) and secondary dimensions. There are three categories of dimensions: primary, secondary and tertiary dimensions (Elkhwesky et al., 2019). The primary dimensions include age, disability, ethnicity, race and gender. The secondary dimensions comprise culture, sexual orientation, thinking style, religion, lifestyle, economic status, education, nationality, geographic origin, political orientation, language, family status and work experience. The tertiary dimensions include assumptions, beliefs, feelings, values, group norms, attitudes, and perceptions which are the nucleus of an individual's identity. According to Sartorius et al., in Jayawardana & Priyashantha (2019), the iceberg model depicts the diversity dimensions. As an analogy to the iceberg, these dimensions have three facets.

***Dimensions of Workforce Diversity***

<b>Primary Dimensions</b>	<b>Secondary Dimensions</b>	<b>Tertiary Dimensions</b>
Race Age Ethnicity Disability Gender	Religion Lifestyle Education Economic status Culture Sexual orientation Political orientation Family status Thinking style Geographic origin Work experience Language Nationality	Beliefs Group norms Assumptions Values Perceptions Feelings Attitudes

*Source:* Rijamampianina & Carmichael (2005)

By the volition of the authors of this paper, three dimensions of workforce diversity, one each from the three facets will has been chosen as can be seen in the conceptual framework. These are gender, political orientation and values to be used in this paper.

**Gender Diversity**

Gender diversity is an umbrella term that is used to describe gender identities that demonstrate a diversity of expression beyond the binary framework. For many gender diverse people, the concept of *binary* gender – having to choose to express yourself as male or female – is constraining. Some people would prefer to have the freedom to change from one gender to another, or not have a gender identity at all. Others just want to be able to openly defy or challenge more normalised concepts of gender.

For gender diverse people, their identity is about presenting something more outwardly authentic to the world, whether they understand themselves to be differently gendered, or have no gender at all. It is important to recognise that many cultures throughout history have recognised gender diversity beyond masculine and feminine. Today the internet has provided a platform where people can explore common experiences with gender diversity and a lot of the language used to describe these experiences is still evolving. There are often misunderstandings that report of there being hundreds of genders, each with unique rules, language and pronouns. A lot of these claims are exaggerated, taking into account very niche and specialised terms, or very personal explorations of gender (Mellin et al., 2023).

### ***Political Orientation Diversity***

Organizations are known to vary in their political leanings, but it is unknown how political diversity among coworkers affects organizational outcomes. Political ideology has thus become a growing fault-line across teams and organizations with which today's managers must contend and yet, research findings suggests that we tend to not handle these divisions well. Nevertheless, decades of social science has found that the presence of diverse perspectives is beneficial for creative companies and teams. Diverse perspectives enable groups to search a wider space of solutions to their problems, even if that creative process can be uncomfortable and taxing. In our own prior research, we examined millions of book co-purchases online and found that those on the political right and left — those who bought conservative versus liberal books — purchased very distinct books of science and literature. This may make conversation across political divides more difficult as interlocutors cannot even appeal to the same "facts," but it also increases the possibility that political conversations can unlock diverse perspectives on more and more issues (Shi et al., 2019).

### ***Values Diversity***

Values diversity stem from differences in basic values, preferences, and priorities of individuals. It occurs when members of a workgroup differ in terms of what they think the group's real task, goal, target, or mission should be. Having clear company values helps you ensure that all your employees are working towards the same goals. Your core values support the company's vision and shape its culture. That's why every single business decision should be aligned with these values. A business without core values isn't really a business. How can you build great teams, deliver excellent customer service and foster innovation if you haven't defined and shared your company values with your employees? Your core company values shape your company culture and impact your business strategy. They help you create a purpose, improve team cohesion, and create a sense of commitment in the workplace (Bodo et al., 2019)

### ***Concept of Organizational Culture***

Organizational culture is a system of values, norms, customs and beliefs shared and assimilated by the entire membership of the organization in order to transform them into inherent characteristics of their behavior. The newly acquired behavior will be promoted, defended and developed throughout their work. The values, norms and the internalized mode of actions, governs the behaviour of the people in the workplace as a way of work ethics (Hansen & Wernerfelt, 1989). To understand this concept in our present time, culture as a concept expresses an essential element within the classic world that influences the way in which a man should educate himself in order to be a successful and an excellent human being in the organization and the society in general. According to Edewor & Aluko, (2007) citing Tylor (1871), culture is seen as that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, custom and any other capabilities and habits that is acquired by man as a member of a social group. On the other hand, a 2002 document from the United Nations agency, UNESCO, states that culture is the set of distinctive spiritual, material, Intellectual and emotional features of a people or a social entity and that it encompasses in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs (Extra, & Yagmur, 2002).

### ***Concept of Employee Performance***

**Sinclair** (2001) posited that employee performance is dependent on the willingness and also the openness of the employees themselves on doing their jobs. Continuing, he maintained that by employees having willingness and openness in course of doing their jobs, employee performance will result which in itself will crystallize into employee productivity and effectiveness. Furthermore, **Stanley** (2003) also explained that for organizations to achieve their expected employee performance, they have to get employees task to be done on track as to achieve their organizational

goal or target. By having the work or job done on track, employers could be able to monitor their employees and help them improve their performance. Furthermore, a reward system should be implemented based on the performance of employees. This is to motivate the employees in order to perform productively on their tasks. There are several factors that are being described by Stanley (2003) towards the success of the employees' performance. The factors are such as physical work environment, equipment and machinery, meaningful work, performance expectation, and feedback on performance, reward for good or bad system, standard operating procedures, knowledge, skills and attitudes. Franco et al (2002) defined performance as that which relies on internal motivation but presence of internal factors such as necessary skills, intellectual capacity and resources to do the job clearly. As a consequence employers are expected to provide the appropriate working conditions in order to make sure the performance of employees meet their required standards. Companies and organizations should focus on building employees positive performance, through providing employees with tools and skills to meet new realities and challenges (Batarliené et al, 2017). Globalization, new market demands, innovation and smart economy are considered as challenges as well as drivers for companies to maintain and improve employee performance (Cooper & Ezzamel, 2013). Dealing with quick changes in technologies, stakeholders requirements and market demands are dependent on reducing the gap within employees attitude as underpinning factor on achieving smart goals of the organization (Shah et al, 2019).

Historically, employee performance linkage has been primarily discussed by theorists from the Socio-Technical and Human Relations schools of thought. According to Trist & Emery (1960), employee performance depends on the congruence between the technical and social structures of the organization. Building upon this hypothesis, the Human Relations perspective posits that satisfied staff are performance-inclined workforce (Lilbert, 1961; McGregor, 1960). Thus, employee productivity and effectiveness are achieved through employee satisfaction and attention to employees' physical as well as socio-emotional needs. Human relations researchers further argue that employee satisfaction sentiments are best achieved through maintaining a positive social organizational environment, such as by providing autonomy, participation and mutual trust (Lilbert, 1961). Based on this reasoning, employee performance is believed to influence the development of routine patterns of interaction within organizations. Through mutual interactions, employees develop relationships with co-workers that also prescribe behavioral expectations and influence behaviors (e.g. norms or informal standards of acceptable behavior). For an illustration, an unhappy employee could be prevented from lowering their performance by control mechanisms (e.g. standards of measurement, supervisory influence). However, widespread dissatisfaction among employees could lead to a strike or sabotage that might hinder an organization's effectiveness and employee performance. Alternatively, dissatisfied employees might choose to maintain performance levels (due to control mechanisms) but neglect to inform supervisors of important information that, over time, would result in lower organizational effectiveness or efficiency. Thus, employees' job satisfaction sentiments are important because they can determine collaborative effort (Hirsch et al., 2002). Brenner (2002) asserted that the ability of employees within an organization to share knowledge throughout the system depends on the conditions of their work environment. Some employees tend to be more productive in a well facilitated work environment. More so, the quality of comfort variable from work environment determines the level of satisfaction and productivity of workers. Workers productivity cannot be optimal, if the conditions of work environment are not favorable. Improved work environment enhances employee's performance. Furthermore, researchers have defined employee performance, as well as highlighted parameters affecting employee performance. Anitha (2013) reports that the performance of an individual or an organization depends strongly on all organizational activities, policies, practices, knowledge management practices and employee engagement. These elements are vital determinants fostering high levels of employee performance. On their own, Islami et al (2018) recognizes managing performance as a planned process of which the key elements are agreement, measurement, support,

feedback and positive reinforcement, which shaped outcomes in terms of performance expectation. Also, Bataineh (2017) highlights employee's performance as a combination of efficiency and effectiveness of the employee's daily tasks to meet the expectations of the stakeholders. Isaac et al (2017) shows that employees highly agree that deploying the internet technology to their job helped them in improving task process, education acquisition and the quality of their communication which leads to improving individual performance as well as organizational sense of belonging. On the other hand, Pawirosumarto et al (2017) examines employee performance and work environment that comprises of physical and non-physical factors extant with employees which have positive and significant effects on improving their performance. While Smith & Bititc (2017) emphasize on improving performance measurement systems and performance management practices as factors of work environment which enhance employee engagement levels. Also, Mensah (2018) supports their ideas by considering talent management as a critical success factor within companies. To him, this consideration has become the most core managerial value in our highly dynamic and uncertain market environment of the twenty-first-century era.

### **Workforce Diversity and Employee Performance**

Workforce diversity can have a major effect on the employee performance as well as the overall performance of the organizations. Different scholars have noted that different dimensions of diversity have different effects in the organizations (Yadav & Lenka, 2020). According to Barney (in Yilmaz et al., 2021), the resource view of the organizations demonstrates a positive relationship among diversity and employee performance while as the Social Identity Theory by Tajfel, 1978 puts forward a negative relationship among performance and workforce diversity. Different studies show that various dimensions of diversity can have varied effects on the performance of employees which can range from positive, negative or no effect at all. If considered individually certain, some researches reveal that there is a positive effect of age diversity on performance of employees (Akram & Siddiqui, 2019; Patrício & Franco, 2022) while others show negative relationship (Müller et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2021) while some other studies reveal a significant relationship among age diversity and performance (Gan & Yusof, 2019). Similarly in case of gender diversity some studies show no relationship (Kelemen, 2020), some show a positive effect (Herring et al., 2019) and some show a negative effect (De Masi & Slomka-Golebiowska, 2023). In case of racial and ethnic diversity similar contradicting results have been obtained where some show no relation between performance and ethnic diversity (Liu et al., 2021) while some others report positive (Hoang & Gu, 2023) and some reveal a negative result (Tai et al., 2022). Another important primary dimension of diversity which is gender diversity has not been adequately studied in terms diversity and of its effects on performance but more attention have been disabilities and discrimination. Due to the continuous rise in the diversity of the personnel, there is an increased interest of scholars towards this area. This paper focuses on the influence of gender, political affiliation and values dimensions of workforce diversity on the performance of employees in an organization.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### ***Institutional Theory***

In general, the institutional theory posits that the institutional environment, context or field influences the behaviour of organizations. The constituents of the field include the organization's social context, the scope of its activities, and its network of social relationships (Ossai & Opara, 2022). To justify the review and analysis of institutional theory in the context of workforce diversity, Social Identity Theory of Henri Tajfel becomes poignantly helpful to articulately elucidate the paradigm in terms of employee performance. The theory begins with the premise that individuals define their own identities with regard to social groups and that such identifications work to protect and bolster self-identity. The creation of group identities involves both the categorization of one's "in-group" with regard to an "out-group" and the tendency to view one's own group with a positive

bias vis-à-vis the out-group. The result is an identification with a collective, depersonalized identity based on group membership and imbued with positive aspects (Udenze, 2022). Therefore, institutional context tends to advance workforce performance in particular, and corporate productivity in general through the out-workings of the group identities and interface of categorizations of group membership and norms. Broadly speaking, the institutional forces drive the agent's behaviour by aligning the agent's beliefs with societal norms, with the alignment being caused by internalization of norms. Norms drive group as well as organizational behaviour especially when the groups' normative focus and member group identification are high (Terry & Hogg, 1996; Kallgren, Reno & Cialdini, 2000). Organizations can be conceptualized as a consciously coordinated social unit that functions on a relatively continuous basis to achieve a set of goals (Robbins, Judge & Vohra, 2013). Hence, organizations being a specific type of group are likely to be affected by group norms.

### **CONCLUSION & SUGGESTIONS**

The paper focused on identifying workforce diversity in an organization and its influence on employee performance. The influence of having a diverse workforce was evaluated in terms of gender diversity, political orientation diversity and values diversity on the performance of employees in an organization. The evident interactions of the variables of study provide reasonable basis for the assertions put forward in this section of the study. Admittedly, the paper observes that workforce diversity has strong implications for employee performance. Workforce diversity contributes towards the extent to which an organization is able to harness the benefits offered by the diversity within its workplace. To this end, the paper identifies workforce diversity as a significant precursor to employee performance. Hence, it was asserted that workforce diversity, groups or labels, especially that which addresses the gender, political orientation and values diversity of the workforce of an organization, has a significant influence on employee performance. Invariably, this contributes substantially towards the achievement of good and effective time management, cost minimization and waste minimization of organizational resources. In other words, it could facilitate prompt design to market, delivery and job completion durations. Equally, it could bring about improvement on quality, labour and strategic costs. Finally, it could bring about reduction in quality failure, idle capacity and excess items in an organization. Given the indications of associations between the predictor variable of workforce diversity and the criterion variable of employee performance, as well as the moderator variable of organizational culture, the authors of this paper recommends as follows:

- i. That organizations should institutionalize gender diversity and emphasize on fairness, equity, exchange of ideology that involves both male and female sex in the supervisory and managerial levels of leadership. This is to achieve workforce productivity goals and objectives of the organization through members' collaboration and teamwork, rather than particular gender categories of groupings.
- ii. That organizations should create, as a matter of deliberate policy, platforms, frameworks and measures to address instances of political and ideological idiosyncrasies. Such policies would ameliorate the consequences of political intolerance and ideological extremism in the work place. It is necessary for organizations to consciously factor in moderation of political diversity and champion an affirmative action for corporate democratic ideals and values of inclusion.
- iii. Finally, organizations should structure their leadership style in a manner that engenders the cultivation and con-naturalization of organizational citizenship behavior. This will crossbreed with the diverse workforce bonding them into a common corporate consciousness that would eventually translate into a ripple effect of positive outcomes in employee performance.

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