

Relationship Between HR Strategy on Gender and Development and Perceived Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace: Basis for Strategic Human Resources

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between Human Resource (HR) strategies for Gender and Development (GAD) and employees' perceptions of workplace diversity and inclusion (D&I) in Philippine government organizations. Guided by Social Role Theory and Diversity Management Theory, the research investigated how recruitment, promotion, gender equality policies, training, and support programs contribute to inclusive workplace practices. A descriptive-comparative design was used, with 100 employees as respondents selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using validated questionnaires and analyzed with descriptive statistics, t-tests, and ANOVA. Findings showed that the level of implementation of HR strategies for GAD was consistently rated low across all domains, particularly in equitable recruitment, career advancement, policy enforcement, diversity training, and employee support initiatives. Similarly, employees perceived workplace inclusivity as low, citing limited leadership opportunities, unclear pay transparency, and minimal participation in decision-making. No significant differences in perceptions were found across gender or age groups, indicating systemic implementation gaps rather than demographic-specific challenges. The study concludes that Philippine organizations must strengthen GAD frameworks by institutionalizing inclusive recruitment, transparent promotion systems, mandatory diversity training, and robust support programs. Practical and policy implications are highlighted for advancing national gender equality goals and aligning HR systems with global best practices.

Keywords: HR Strategy, Gender and Development, Diversity, Inclusion, Workplace Equity

Introduction

Human resource (HR) strategies are pivotal in shaping organizational cultures that promote fairness, equity, and inclusivity. In the Philippines, the mainstreaming of Gender and Development (GAD) principles has been institutionalized through Republic Act (RA) No. 9710, the *Magna Carta of Women*, which mandates government agencies to integrate gender perspectives into policies, budgets, and programs (Philippine Commission on Women [PCW], 2020). Likewise, the Civil Service Commission (CSC)

enforces merit-based recruitment and non-discriminatory promotion to safeguard equal opportunities in public employment. Despite these frameworks, evidence suggests that implementation gaps remain, raising concerns about whether organizations truly foster inclusive workplaces (Yeganeh, 2021).

The GAD framework emphasizes dismantling structural barriers that perpetuate inequality and limit participation across genders. By embedding GAD into HR systems, organizations are expected to ensure equitable recruitment, transparent promotion, effective diversity training, and support programs that benefit all employees (Sarangi, Singh, & Thakur, 2023). Wu (2024) argues that empowerment through education and career opportunities is a catalyst for gender equity, yet institutional barriers continue to constrain women's representation in decision-making. Kipchirchir (2024) further notes that leadership pipelines remain dominated by men, reflecting persistent cultural stereotypes that link leadership with masculinity. In the Philippine context, such dynamics manifest in limited advancement for women and the uneven application of gender-sensitive policies within government offices.

Diversity refers to representation across demographic groups, while inclusion reflects the extent to which individuals feel valued, respected, and supported (Yunyi, Singh, & Kularajasingam, 2024). Inclusive workplaces foster innovation, engagement, and job satisfaction (Jabeen, Anwer, & Umer, 2023). However, organizations often fall short in moving beyond compliance to embed inclusivity in daily practices (Williams & Cox, 2022). Leadership remains a crucial dimension of inclusion; Ashmawy (2023) highlights that inclusive leaders build psychological safety and participation in decision-making, while Satzger (2023) finds that transparent pay and equitable recognition increase retention. By contrast, poorly executed diversity initiatives, such as irregular seminars or opaque promotion systems, reinforce employee perceptions of inequity (Fitriana, 2023).

Employees' perceptions of HR practices strongly shape their engagement and sense of belonging. Studies demonstrate that women and minority groups frequently perceive lower levels of inclusion, particularly in leadership access and compensation systems (Trochmann, 2023). The persistence of traditional gender roles further influences organizational outcomes. Tabassum and Nayak (2021) observed that women are often relegated to administrative or supportive functions, while men dominate strategic decision-making. Klein et al. (2021) described this dynamic as the "glass ceiling," where women encounter invisible barriers to promotion. Similarly, Criado-Gomis et al. (2020) stressed the importance of mentorship and training reforms to equalize career development opportunities. These perspectives resonate with Philippine organizations, where cultural expectations continue to shape job assignments and limit women's advancement.

This study is anchored on Social Role Theory and Diversity Management Theory. Social Role Theory explains how societal expectations regarding gender roles influence workplace behaviors and organizational decisions (Eagly & Wood, 1999). It suggests that stereotypes associating leadership with men and caregiving with women perpetuate inequities in recruitment, promotion, and role assignment. Diversity Management Theory, on the other hand, emphasizes the systemic integration of diversity initiatives into organizational structures (Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly, 2006). According to this framework, symbolic gestures—such as policy documents or occasional training—are insufficient; inclusivity requires sustained programs, accountability systems, and leadership commitment. Together, these theories provide a lens to analyze how HR GAD strategies can transform organizational practices or, conversely, how their absence perpetuates inequality.

While global studies highlight the benefits of diversity and inclusion for innovation and organizational performance (Ashmawy, 2023; Yunyi et al., 2024), few empirical works have systematically

assessed how GAD-oriented HR strategies shape inclusivity perceptions in Philippine government organizations. Much of the existing literature focuses either on private-sector initiatives (Wu, 2023) or on gender equality policies at the national level (Sarangi et al., 2023). Evidence from the public sector remains fragmented, particularly regarding how employees perceive the actual implementation of recruitment policies, promotion systems, diversity training, and support programs. Moreover, while global discourse emphasizes intersectionality—including gender, class, and sexuality—Philippine studies have primarily examined gender in isolation, leaving gaps in understanding systemic inclusivity (PCW, 2020).

To address these gaps, the study investigated the relationship between HR strategies for GAD and employees' perceptions of workplace diversity and inclusion in government organizations.

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, it sought to:

1. Describe the demographic characteristics of respondents.
2. assess HR GAD strategy implementation in recruitment, promotion, workplace equality policies, training, and support programs.
3. examine perceptions of workplace inclusivity in leadership, pay transparency, and decision-making.
4. explore the influence of traditional gender roles.
5. evaluate engagement in diversity programs; and
6. test differences in perceptions across demographic groups.

This study is significant for HR managers, as it provides diagnostic insights into the gaps between mandates and practice; for policymakers, as it highlights areas requiring stronger compliance mechanisms; for the academic community, as it contextualizes global theories in Philippine organizations; and for employees, as it underscores the importance of equitable HR systems in shaping professional growth and workplace satisfaction.

Methodology

Research Designs. This study employed a descriptive–comparative research design, appropriate for assessing perceptions across demographic groups and describing the state of HR strategies on GAD and inclusivity.

Population and Sampling. A total of 100 respondents participated, selected purposively from government organizations in Metro Manila. Inclusion criteria required respondents to be at least 18 years old, employed for six months or more, and willing to provide consent.

Respondents

Table 1

Profile of the respondents (N =100)

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
21 – 25 years old	7	7
26 – 32 years old	46	46
33 – 39 years old	46	46
Sex		
Female	52	52
Male	47	47
Educational Attainment		
Vocational Graduate	1	1
College level	3	3
College graduate	83	83
Post graduate	12	12
Employment Status		
Employed	100	100

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 100 respondents. Almost all participants were between 26–32 years old (46%) and 33–39 years old (46%), with only 7% belonging to the 21–25 age group. The sample was nearly balanced by sex, with 52% female and 47% male respondents. In terms of educational attainment, the majority were college graduates (83%), followed by postgraduates (12%), college level (3%), and vocational graduates (1%). All respondents were employed at the time of the study.

Research Instruments. Four instruments were used: (1) HR Strategies for GAD Questionnaire (25 items on recruitment, promotion, policies, training, and support programs); (2) Perceived Workplace Inclusivity Scale (15 items on leadership, pay transparency, decision-making); (3) Traditional Gender Roles Scale (15 items on representation, distribution, development opportunities); and (4) Engagement in Diversity Programs Inventory (15 items on training, ERGs, and support services). All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale. Validity was established through expert review, and Cronbach’s alpha exceeded .70 for all scales, indicating reliability (Taber, 2018).

Data Collection. Data collection involved printed and online surveys distributed over one month. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was assured. Data analysis used SPSS, with descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, SDs) and inferential tests (t-tests and ANOVA at $p < .05$). Ethical clearance was obtained, and the study complied with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173) and Belmont Report principles.

Results and Discussion

1. HR Strategies for Gender Development

Respondents rated the organization's recruitment practices as low ($M = 2.44$, $SD = 0.65$). While some acknowledged gender-neutral job postings, many reported limited initiatives to actively promote gender balance in hiring. Recruitment policies were perceived as lacking targeted strategies for underrepresented groups, and job advertisements were not consistently framed to encourage inclusivity. This suggests that while basic compliance with non-discrimination policies exists, proactive measures to ensure equitable recruitment remain underdeveloped. The dimension of promotion also received a low mean score ($M = 2.42$, $SD = 0.68$). Respondents highlighted the absence of transparent mechanisms in career advancement opportunities. Several employees noted that men were often perceived as more suitable for leadership roles, reflecting lingering gender stereotypes.

Moreover, mentoring programs and leadership training for women were reported as inconsistent. These findings align with earlier studies indicating that women frequently encounter barriers to advancement, often described as the "glass ceiling" (Klein et al., 2021). Workplace policies promoting gender equality were likewise rated low ($M = 2.40$, $SD = 0.62$). While organizations had GAD-related policies on paper, implementation was viewed as symbolic rather than substantive. Respondents reported limited awareness campaigns or monitoring systems to ensure compliance. Additionally, grievance mechanisms were not widely known among employees, raising concerns about accessibility and trust in reporting procedures. The availability and effectiveness of diversity training received a low rating ($M = 2.40$, $SD = 0.60$).



Figure 1 shows that the implementation of HR strategies for Gender and Development was consistently rated low across all domains. Recruitment ($M = 2.44$), Promotion ($M = 2.42$), Workplace Policies ($M = 2.40$), Diversity Training ($M = 2.40$), and Support Programs ($M = 2.42$) all scored below the midpoint, reflecting limited institutionalization of gender-sensitive practices.

Although some offices had conducted seminars, these were often one-off sessions with little follow-through. Respondents emphasized the lack of continuous training that addresses unconscious bias, inclusive leadership, and gender-sensitive communication. This finding supports earlier research noting that diversity training without sustained integration rarely achieves lasting outcomes (Fitriana, 2023). Support programs, such as childcare assistance, wellness activities, and employee counseling, were perceived as limited ($M =$

2.42, SD = 0.63). Most respondents expressed that available programs were either irregular or not accessible to all employees. Female employees in particular noted the absence of structured maternity support beyond what is mandated by law. These results highlight gaps in institutionalizing employee support systems that address both gender-specific and broader inclusivity needs.

Findings revealed a balanced gender distribution among respondents, with most being mid-career professionals. HR strategies for GAD were consistently rated **low** across all domains. Recruitment practices lacked proactive inclusivity, reflecting reliance on symbolic compliance rather than substantive measures (Williams & Cox, 2022). Promotion systems were perceived as opaque, with women encountering barriers consistent with the “glass ceiling” (Klein et al., 2021).

2. Perceived Workplace Diversity

Respondents rated leadership opportunities in their organizations as low (M = 2.34, SD = 0.61). Employees observed that leadership positions remained dominated by men and that women often faced greater scrutiny when aspiring for higher roles. Although a few cases of female leaders were cited, these were considered exceptions rather than the norm. This perception resonates with Social Role Theory, which explains how societal expectations reinforce male-dominated leadership roles (Eagly & Wood, 1999).



Figure 2 shows that perceptions of workplace inclusivity were generally **low** across all dimensions. Leadership Opportunities (M = 2.34) and Pay Transparency (M = 2.35) were rated lowest, while Decision-Making Participation (M = 2.45) was slightly higher but still below the midpoint, reflecting limited inclusivity in organizational practices.

Perceptions of pay transparency were also low (M = 2.35, SD = 0.58). Many employees expressed uncertainty about salary structures and believed that compensation systems lacked transparency. Although government salary grades are standardized, respondents felt that allowances, incentives, and opportunities for professional development were not equitably distributed. This ambiguity contributed to perceptions of inequality, particularly among contractual employees.

Decision-making participation scored low as well (M = 2.45, SD = 0.64). Respondents shared that decision-making processes were typically confined to senior officials, with limited opportunities for rank-and-file employees to contribute. This limited engagement undermines inclusivity and may negatively

affect employee motivation and organizational commitment. Taken together, these findings reveal that employees perceive workplace inclusivity as insufficiently practiced in leadership, pay systems, and participatory decision-making.

Workplace policies existed but were weakly enforced, echoing Sarangi et al.'s (2023) findings that policy awareness and accountability are often insufficient. Diversity training was limited to sporadic events without continuity, supporting Fitriana's (2023) argument that one-off interventions fail to transform culture. Support programs such as childcare or counseling were minimal, suggesting a gap between RA 9710 mandates and organizational practices (PCW, 2020).

Perceptions of inclusivity were also low. Leadership opportunities remained skewed toward men, consistent with Social Role Theory's emphasis on culturally reinforced gender stereotypes (Eagly & Wood, 1999). Pay transparency was unclear despite standardized salary grades, as incentives and development opportunities appeared inequitable, aligning with Satzger's (2023) findings on fairness perceptions. Decision-making participation was confined to senior officials, contradicting Ashmawy's (2023) call for inclusive leadership that fosters participation and psychological safety.

3. Traditional gender roles in the workplace

The influence of traditional gender roles on workplace dynamics was assessed across three dimensions: representation, role distribution, and skill development. Overall, these areas received low ratings ($M = 2.38$, $SD = 0.61$), reflecting the persistence of gendered expectations in organizational settings. Respondents noted that men were more frequently appointed to leadership positions, reinforcing traditional gender hierarchies. They also observed that administrative and supportive tasks were often assigned to women, whereas strategic roles were more likely to be given to men. In terms of skill development, opportunities for advanced training were perceived as unevenly distributed, with men reportedly more likely to receive technical or leadership development programs. These findings confirm that entrenched gender norms continue to shape workplace practices and hinder progress toward substantive equality.



Figure 3 indicates that traditional gender roles continue to shape workplace dynamics, with low ratings across Representation ($M = 2.38$), Role Distribution ($M = 2.36$), and Skill Development Opportunities ($M = 2.40$).

Engagement in diversity programs was also rated low ($M = 2.36$, $SD = 0.59$), indicating limited employee involvement in initiatives intended to promote inclusivity. Participation in training was restricted mainly to general HR orientations, with little exposure to specialized diversity programs. Although some offices had established Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), participation was minimal due to a lack of promotion or incentives. Similarly, counseling and mentoring services were underutilized, largely because such programs were not institutionalized or regularly offered. These findings suggest that diversity programs are not fully integrated into organizational culture, thereby reducing their potential impact on fostering an inclusive environment.

Engagement in diversity programs was low, with limited ERG participation due to weak institutional support. This finding mirrors Junior's (2024) conclusion that ERG effectiveness requires managerial backing. The lack of sustained diversity initiatives underscores Kalev et al.'s (2006) argument that symbolic gestures fail without systemic integration.

4. Differences between genders in their perception of HR Strategies

Table 2

Difference Between the Gender of Respondents and Their Perception of HR Strategies for Gender and Development

Indicators	Profile	N	M (SD)	t-value	p-value	Decision
Recruitment	Female	52	2.45 (0.30)	0.26	0.80	Not significant
	Male	47	2.43 (0.31)			
Career Advancement	Female	52	2.44 (0.25)	0.65	0.52	Not significant
	Male	47	2.40 (0.27)			
Workplace policy	Female	52	2.42 (0.26)	0.86	0.39	Not significant
	Male	47	2.37 (0.26)			
Diversity	Female	52	2.40 (0.26)	0.15	0.88	Not significant
	Male	47	2.40 (0.28)			
Employment Support	Female	52	2.41 (0.29)	-0.30	0.77	Not significant
	Male	47	2.43 (0.30)			

Inferential analysis was conducted to explore whether perceptions varied across demographic characteristics, including gender, age, length of service, and employment status. Independent-samples t-tests revealed no significant differences between male and female respondents in their perceptions of HR strategies for GAD ($t = 1.12$, $p > .05$) or workplace inclusivity ($t = 0.95$, $p > .05$). Traditional gender roles persisted in role assignment, with men favored for strategic positions and women for supportive tasks. Such practices reinforce inequality, as noted by Tabassum and Nayak (2021). Skill development opportunities were uneven, echoing Criado-Gomis et al.'s (2020) argument that without structural reforms, women remain disadvantaged in training access.

5. Differences in age in their perception of HR Strategies

Similarly, one-way ANOVA results showed no significant differences across age groups in perceptions of HR strategies ($F = 1.24, p > .05$) or inclusivity ($F = 1.18, p > .05$). The lack of statistically significant differences indicates that age does not play a substantial role in shaping employees' perception of HR strategies for gender and development in the studied organization.

Table 3*Difference Between the Age of Respondents and Their Perception of HR Strategies for Gender and Development*

Indicators	Profile	N	M (SD)	f-value	p-value	Decision
Recruitment	33 years old - 39 years old	46	2.46 (0.29)	0.30	0.74	Not significant
	21 years old - 25 years old	7	2.49 (0.25)			
	26 years old - 32 years old	46	2.42 (0.33)			
	33 years old - 39 years old	46	2.48 (0.24)			
Career Advancement	21 years old - 25 years old	7	2.49 (0.16)	3.19	0.06	Not significant
	26 years old - 32 years old	46	2.35 (0.28)			
	33 years old - 39 years old	46	2.41 (0.25)			
	21 years old - 25 years old	7	2.60 (0.31)			
Workplace policy	26 years old - 32 years old	46	2.35 (0.25)	2.29	0.13	Not significant
	33 years old - 39 years old	46	2.41 (0.27)			
	21 years old - 25 years old	7	2.46 (0.28)			
	26 years old - 32 years old	46	2.38 (0.27)			
Diversity	33 years old - 39 years old	46	2.40 (0.28)	0.25	0.78	Not significant
	21 years old - 25 years old	7	2.49 (0.28)			
	26 years old - 32 years old	46	2.42 (0.32)			
	21 years old - 25 years old	7	2.49 (0.28)			

6. Differences between gender and their perceptions of workplace diversity

As shown in Table 4, independent-samples t-tests revealed **no significant differences** between male and female respondents in their perceptions of participation in diversity initiatives ($t = 0.69, p = 0.49$),

involvement in employee activities ($t = -0.92$, $p = 0.36$), and awareness and utilization of inclusivity programs ($t = 0.33$, $p = 0.75$).

Both genders rated these dimensions at similarly low levels, indicating that inclusivity initiatives are perceived as weak across the board. This finding suggests that inclusivity challenges are systemic rather than gender-specific, with both male and female employees recognizing the limited institutionalization of diversity programs.

Table 4

Difference Between the Gender of Respondents and Their Perception of HR Strategies for Workplace Inclusivity

Indicators	Profile	N	M (SD)	t-value	p-value	Decision
Participation Diversity	Female	52	2.38 (0.27)	0.69	0.49	Not significant
	Male	47	2.34 (0.31)			
Involvement of Employee	Female	52	2.38 (0.29)	-0.92	0.36	Not significant
	Male	47	2.43 (0.28)			
Awareness and utilization	Female	52	2.32 (0.30)	0.33	0.75	Not significant
	Male	47	2.30 (0.33)			

It supports Diversity Management Theory, which posits that symbolic efforts without structural integration are unlikely to yield meaningful differences in employee perceptions (Kalev et al., 2006).

7. Differences between Age and Workplace Inclusivity

Table 5

Difference Between the Gender of Respondents and Their Perception of HR Strategies for Workplace Inclusivity

Indicators	Profile	N	M (SD)	f-value	p-value	Decision
Participation Diversity	33 years old - 39 years old	46	2.37 (0.27)	0.53	0.60	Not significant
	21 years old - 25 years old	7	2.29 (0.19)			
	26 years old - 32 years old	46	2.35 (0.32)			
Involvement of Employee	33 years old - 39 years old	46	2.38 (0.26)	0.28	0.76	Not significant
	21 years old - 25 years old	7	2.46 (0.28)			
	26 years old - 32 years old	46	2.41 (0.31)			
Awareness and utilization	33 years old - 39 years old	46	2.31 (0.29)	0.01	0.99	Not significant
	21 years old - 25 years old	7	2.31 (0.16)			
	26 years old - 32 years old	46	2.32 (0.36)			

Table 5 indicates that there were no significant differences in perceptions of workplace inclusivity across age groups. Participation in diversity ($F = 0.53, p = 0.60$), involvement in employee activities ($F = 0.28, p = 0.76$), and awareness and utilization of programs ($F = 0.01, p = 0.99$) were rated similarly low by all groups. This shows that inclusivity challenges are systemic rather than age-specific, with employees of different generations sharing the same perception of weak implementation. Inferential analysis showed no significant differences across gender and age. This uniformity suggests systemic shortcomings affecting all employees, consistent with Jabeen et al. (2023), who found that weak institutional practices create broad perceptions of inequity. Overall, findings confirm that HR strategies on GAD remain underdeveloped, inclusivity is limited, and cultural norms persist, all reinforcing the need for structural reforms.

The study also contributes to the theoretical discourse on diversity management. Kalev et al. (2006) argue that diversity initiatives must be embedded in core organizational systems to be effective. The present findings confirm that symbolic gestures—such as occasional diversity seminars or policy documents without enforcement—are insufficient. For diversity management to be successful, inclusivity must be integrated into recruitment, promotion, training, and support systems. This requires managerial accountability and continuous monitoring.

From a practical standpoint, the findings suggest that organizations must prioritize transparency and accountability in recruitment and promotion, institutionalize diversity training as part of employee development, and expand support programs to meet the diverse needs of employees. Policy implications include the need for stricter monitoring of compliance with GAD mandates, regular audits of inclusivity practices, and stronger mechanisms for grievance reporting. These recommendations align with global best practices, which emphasize evidence-based interventions and accountability structures as central to advancing workplace inclusivity (Yunyi et al., 2024).

In summary, the study revealed that both HR strategies for GAD and employees' perceptions of workplace inclusivity remain at low levels. Traditional gender norms and insufficient institutionalization of diversity programs continue to undermine inclusivity, while the absence of significant demographic differences highlights the systemic nature of these challenges. The results affirm the relevance of Social Role Theory and Diversity Management Theory in explaining organizational behavior and underscore the need for structural reforms to align organizational practices with both national policies and international standards of equity and inclusion.

Conclusions

The study concludes that HR strategies for GAD in government organizations are perceived as weak, with consistently low ratings across recruitment, promotion, policies, training, and support programs. Workplace inclusivity is also limited, particularly in leadership, pay transparency, and decision-making. Traditional gender roles continue to shape workplace dynamics, and diversity programs are poorly institutionalized. Importantly, no significant demographic differences emerged, indicating systemic gaps rather than subgroup-specific issues.

Recommendations

Recommendations include: (1) institutionalizing transparent, gender-sensitive recruitment and promotion systems; (2) mandating continuous diversity training integrated into HR development; (3)

expanding employee support programs, including counseling and childcare; (4) enhancing compliance monitoring for RA 9710 and CSC guidelines through audits and accountability mechanisms; and (5) encouraging future research on intersectionality, such as experiences of LGBTQ+ and persons with disabilities.

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