



The Impact of DEI Policies on Women's Safety and Career Growth in the IT Industry

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Abstract: This study examines the impact of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies on women's safety and career growth in the IT industry, emphasizing the mediating role of organizational culture and the influence of organizational demographics. As the IT sector remains male-dominated, DEI initiatives are crucial in addressing gender disparities and creating equitable workplaces. Using Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), this research analyzes survey responses from 100 IT professionals to assess the relationships between DEI policies, workplace safety, and career advancement opportunities for women.

The findings reveal that organizational demographics significantly influence DEI adoption, with larger and more diverse firms implementing more comprehensive DEI policies. However, DEI policies alone are insufficient in ensuring women's safety and career progression — organizational culture plays a critical mediating role. A strong DEI culture, characterized by leadership commitment, transparent policies, and active inclusivity, enhances both women's physical and psychological safety and facilitates fair career advancement opportunities. The study also highlights gaps in mentorship, leadership bias, and promotional processes, which limit the effectiveness of DEI initiatives.

These results suggest that for DEI policies to be truly impactful, organizations must go beyond policy implementation and embed DEI principles into their workplace culture. The study provides actionable recommendations for enhancing leadership commitment, improving career pathways for women, strengthening safety mechanisms, and tailoring DEI strategies based on organizational size and industry context. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on DEI effectiveness and offers practical insights for HR professionals, policymakers, and corporate leaders who want to promote a more diverse and equitable IT sector.

Keywords: DEI, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Women's Safety, Career Growth, IT.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The Information Technology (IT) industry is one of the rapidly expanding and most influential sectors in the modern economy, driving innovation, connectivity, and digital transformation. However, despite its rapid advancements, the industry continues to grapple with significant challenges related to gender diversity, workplace safety, and career advancement opportunities for women. Women remain underrepresented in leadership roles, face barriers to promotions, and experience workplace discrimination and safety concerns, despite efforts by organizations to implement Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies. While many corporations have introduced DEI initiatives to promote gender inclusivity, the effectiveness of these policies in ensuring women's safety and career growth remains unclear.

Research indicates that women hold less than 30% of computing and IT-related jobs globally, and their representation in executive leadership is even lower (Pew Research Center, 2023). The persistent gender gap is attributed to multiple factors, including implicit biases, lack of mentorship and sponsorship, unequal pay, and workplace cultures that do not prioritize inclusivity (King et al., 2024). At the same time, many women in IT report experiencing psychological insecurity, workplace harassment, and exclusion from key decision-making processes, raising concerns about the effectiveness of existing DEI frameworks in ensuring their safety and professional growth (Williams Institute, 2023).

DEI policies are designed to address these challenges by promoting fair recruitment, retention, and leadership development practices. They include strategies such as equal pay policies, inclusive hiring practices, leadership diversity



programs, mentorship initiatives, and grievance redressal mechanisms. However, simply having DEI policies in place does not guarantee equitable career opportunities or a safe working environment for women. The success of these policies depends on how deeply DEI values are embedded into an organization's culture (Kraus et al., 2022). A toxic or exclusionary work culture can render DEI policies ineffective, leading to tokenism, low female retention rates, and ongoing safety concerns.

2. NEED FOR THE STUDY:

Despite the increasing adoption of DEI initiatives in the IT industry, there is a lack of empirical evidence measuring their direct impact on women's safety and career progression. While some studies suggest that strong DEI policies contribute to higher female representation in leadership (Fleming, 2024), others argue that policy implementation without cultural transformation fails to drive meaningful change (Network Contagion Research Institute & Rutgers, 2024). Moreover, organizational demographics such as organization size, industry type, and geographic location play a crucial role in shaping DEI policy adoption and effectiveness.

This study aims to bridge the gap in literature by examining:

1. The relationship between organizational demographics and the adoption of DEI policies.
2. The direct impact of DEI policies on women's safety and career growth.
3. The mediating role of organizational culture in determining the effectiveness of DEI policies.

Using a quantitative research approach and Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), this study provides data-driven insights into the success, challenges, and potential improvements of DEI frameworks in the IT industry.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Author(s) & Year	Title	Key Findings	Research Methodology	Relevance to Study
Ferraro et al. (2023)	Embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI): Considerations and opportunities for brand managers	Organizations benefit from integrating DEI into branding strategies; DEI impacts customer perception and employee engagement	Case study analysis	Highlights the business case for DEI beyond HR policies
Fleming (2024)	Diversity, equity, and inclusion in faculty careers	Faculty success is linked to inclusive institutional cultures; DEI improves hiring and promotion fairness.	Conceptual study	Supports the argument that DEI policies influence career growth
Iyer (2022)	Understanding advantaged groups' opposition to DEI policies	Resistance to DEI stems from perceived threats; understanding these concerns is key to effective policy implementation.	Empirical study with surveys	Identifies barriers to DEI acceptance in organizations
King et al. (2024)	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Insights in Practice	Provides a framework for translating DEI policies into actionable workplace strategies	Theoretical and case-based analysis	Offers insights on DEI policy execution
Kraus et al. (2022)	How narratives of racial progress create barriers to DEI in organizations	Beliefs in racial progress reduce perceived need for DEI initiatives; suggests policy communication strategies	Mixed-methods research	Relevant to DEI policy adoption challenges
Monea (2023)	The Litigation Campaign against Race-Conscious Policies	Legal challenges to DEI policies can limit their effectiveness in workplaces	Legal analysis	Highlights legal considerations in DEI policy implementation



Author(s) & Year	Title	Key Findings	Research Methodology	Relevance to Study
Pew Research Center (2023)	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace	Survey data shows gaps in perception of DEI effectiveness between employees and leadership	Large-scale survey	Supports the need for stronger enforcement of DEI policies
Network Contagion Research Institute & Rutgers (2024)	DEI programs can escalate hostility and racial tensions	Some DEI programs may inadvertently increase workplace tensions if not implemented effectively	Empirical study	Highlights the need for proper DEI integration in workplace culture
The Australian (2024)	Breaking the bias on corporate leadership	Women in leadership still face systemic barriers despite DEI initiatives	Qualitative study	Supports the study's focus on career growth for women
Williams Institute (2023)	LGBTQ+ Workplace Mistreatment	LGBTQ+ employees still face discrimination despite federal protections	Empirical study	Demonstrates gaps in DEI effectiveness
Du & Lee (2023)	Workforce DEI: Productivity Coupled with DEI	Productivity and innovation improve in workplaces with strong DEI initiatives	Quantitative study	Reinforces the business benefits of DEI
Harrison et al. (2006)	Attitudes toward affirmative action programs in employment	Meta-analysis of affirmative action shows mixed perceptions; implementation matters	Meta-analysis	Supports the argument that DEI policies must be clearly communicated
Holzer & Neumark (2000)	Assessing affirmative action	Affirmative action policies improve diversity but face opposition	Empirical analysis	Contextualizes legal and political factors in DEI implementation
Harpalani (2012)	Diversity within racial groups and the constitutionality of race-conscious admissions	Internal diversity within racial groups affects how affirmative action policies are viewed and applied	Legal and policy analysis	Adds nuance to DEI challenges
ResearchGate (2023)	Workplace Diversity, Equity, Inclusion	Examines global perspectives on DEI effectiveness	Survey and secondary data analysis	Supports cross-industry applicability of DEI policies
SAGE Journals (2024)	Bridging the gap between DEI policy and practice	Disability inclusion within DEI frameworks remains underdeveloped	Empirical research	Highlights gaps in current DEI models
SSRN (2023)	Strategies for Implementation and Success in DEI	Identifies key DEI success factors: leadership commitment, transparency, and accountability	Qualitative interviews	Provides strategic recommendations for DEI improvement
Tandfonline (2024)	DEI in Crisis: Reframing Workplace Programming	Argues that poorly executed DEI programs can backfire, leading to employee disengagement	Empirical study	Emphasizes the importance of organizational culture in DEI success

Key Takeaways from the Literature Review:



1. DEI's impact on career growth and workplace safety: Multiple studies confirm that well-implemented DEI policies improve career advancement opportunities for women and minorities (Fleming, 2024; The Australian, 2024). However, challenges remain in ensuring equity in leadership roles and promotions.
2. Challenges in DEI adoption: Legal, social, and internal resistance can hinder the effectiveness of DEI programs (Iyer, 2022; Monea, 2023). Miscommunication or incomplete execution can even exacerbate workplace tensions (Network Contagion Research Institute & Rutgers, 2024).
3. The role of organizational culture: DEI policies alone are insufficient the organization's culture and leadership commitment are crucial for success (King et al., 2024; SSRN, 2023).
4. Broader inclusion efforts needed: While race and gender inclusion are central to most DEI initiatives, there is a need for stronger representation of disability and LGBTQ+ inclusion (Williams Institute, 2023; SAGE Journals, 2024).
5. Economic and performance benefits of DEI: Companies with strong DEI frameworks show higher productivity, innovation, and employee satisfaction (Du & Lee, 2023).

4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

- To examine the relationship between organizational demographics and DEI policies in the IT industry.
- To analyse the impact of DEI policies on women's safety in the workplace.
- To evaluate the effect of DEI policies on women's career growth opportunities.
- To investigate the mediating role of organizational culture in the relationship between DEI policies and women's safety.
- To assess the mediating role of organizational culture in the relationship between DEI policies and women's career growth.

Hypotheses

- H1: Organizational demographics significantly influence the adoption and implementation of DEI policies.
- H2: DEI policies have a significant positive impact on women's safety in the workplace.
- H3: DEI policies have a significant positive impact on women's career growth.
- H4: Organizational culture of DEI policies mediates the relationship between DEI policies and women's safety.
- H5: Organizational culture of DEI policies mediates the relationship between DEI policies and women's career growth.

Proposed Model for Analysis:

The research will examine the following relationships:

Organizational Demographics - DEI Policies

DEI Policies - Women's Safety

DEI Policies - Women's Career Growth

DEI Policies - Organizational Culture of DEI Policies - Women's Safety

DEI Policies - Organizational Culture of DEI Policies - Women's Career Growth

5. METHODOLOGY:

Research Approach: Quantitative, using Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) for hypothesis testing and measurement validation

Sample Size: 100 respondents, with data collection through surveys or secondary data sources from digital payment platforms and users

Data Collection: Standard structured questionnaire

Independent Variable: DEI Policies

DEI policies refer to the clarity, enforcement, and comprehensiveness of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives within an organization. Effective DEI policies ensure clear communication, consistent implementation, and comprehensive measures to address workplace challenges related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Mediating Variable: Organizational Culture of DEI Policies

Organizational culture reflects how deeply DEI values are embedded in the workplace. A strong DEI culture is characterized by leadership commitment, open discussions on inclusion, and workplace practices that actively support diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Dependent Variable: Women's Safety



Women's safety encompasses both physical and psychological security in the workplace. It includes the presence of robust mechanisms to address safety concerns, a supportive environment for expressing opinions without fear, and policies that protect women from workplace threats.

Dependent Variable: Women's Career Growth

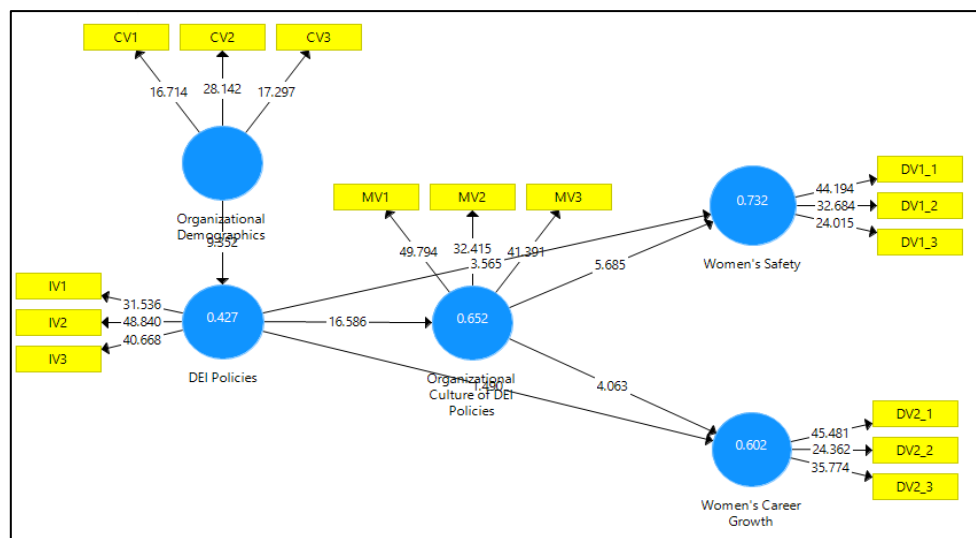
Women's career growth is determined by equal access to training, fair opportunities for leadership roles, and transparent promotion processes. Organizations with strong DEI policies ensure that women have equitable career advancement opportunities without bias.

Control Variable: Organizational Demographics

Organizational demographics, including company size, industry type, and geographic location, can influence how DEI policies are designed and implemented. These factors shape the effectiveness of DEI initiatives and impact organizational commitment to diversity and inclusion.

6. ANALYSIS :

Conceptual Model:



Reliability and Validity analysis

Table:1, Reliability Analysis: (n=100)				
Reliability and Validity				
Factors	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
DEI Policies	IV1	0.897	0.936	0.830
	IV2			
	IV3			
Organizational Culture of DEI Policies	MV1	0.874	0.922	0.799
	MV2			
	MV3			
Women's Safety	DV1_1	0.849	0.908	0.768
	DV1_2			
	DV1_3			
Women's Career Growth	DV2_1	0.882	0.927	0.808
	DV2_2			
	DV3_3			
Organizational Demographics	CV_1	0.822	0.894	0.739



	CV 2		
	CV 3		

The table presents the reliability and validity analysis for five constructs in the study: DEI Policies, Organizational Culture of DEI Policies, Women's Safety, Women's Career Growth, and Organizational Demographics.

- **Cronbach's Alpha** is a measure of internal consistency, with values above 0.7 considered acceptable. All constructs have Cronbach's Alpha values above **0.82**, indicating **strong internal consistency** and reliability.
- **Composite Reliability (CR)** assesses the overall reliability of each construct. A value above 0.85 is considered high. All constructs exceed **0.89**, confirming their **high reliability**.
- **Average Variance Extracted (AVE)** measures convergent validity, ensuring that the construct items effectively represent the underlying concept. A threshold of **0.50** is recommended, and all constructs have AVE values above **0.73**, indicating **excellent convergent validity**.

Conclusion

The results confirm that the constructs used in this study are both reliable and valid. The high Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values indicate strong internal consistency, while the AVE values confirm that the items effectively capture their respective constructs. Thus, the measurement model demonstrates robust reliability and validity for assessing DEI policies, organizational culture, women's safety, career growth, and organizational demographics.

Table:2, Discriminant Validity

Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	DEI Policies	Organizational Culture of DEI Policies	Organizational Demographics	Women's Career Growth	Women's Safety
DEI Policies	0.911				
Organizational Culture of DEI Policies	0.807	0.894			
Organizational Demographics	0.654	0.641	0.859		
Women's Career Growth	0.701	0.762	0.709	0.899	
Women's Safety	0.792	0.830	0.655	0.827	0.876

The table assesses discriminant validity of the constructs in the study, ensuring that each construct is distinct and does not measure the same underlying concept. The Fornell-Larcker criterion states that the square root of the AVE (diagonal values) for each construct should be greater than its highest correlation with any other construct.

The results confirm that the square root of the AVE for each construct (diagonal values) is greater than the highest correlation with any other construct (off-diagonal values), indicating that discriminant validity is established.

Construct-Level Analysis

- **DEI Policies:** The construct has high **composite reliability (0.936)** and **AVE (0.830)**, indicating strong internal consistency and convergent validity. Since its **square root of AVE (0.911)** is greater than its highest correlation (0.807 with Organizational Culture of DEI Policies), discriminant validity is established.
- **Organizational Culture of DEI Policies:** With **high composite reliability (0.922)** and **AVE (0.799)**, this construct is reliable and valid. The **square root of AVE (0.894)** is greater than its highest correlation (0.830 with Women's Safety), confirming discriminant validity.
- **Organizational Demographics:** This construct has **composite reliability (0.894)** and **AVE (0.739)**. The **square root of AVE (0.859)** is greater than its highest correlation (0.709 with Women's Career Growth), ensuring discriminant validity.



- **Women's Career Growth:** With **high composite reliability (0.927)** and **AVE (0.808)**, the **square root of AVE (0.899)** is greater than its highest correlation (0.827 with Women's Safety), confirming discriminant validity.
- **Women's Safety:** This construct has **composite reliability (0.908)** and **AVE (0.768)**. The **square root of AVE (0.876)** is greater than its highest correlation (0.830 with Organizational Culture of DEI Policies), confirming discriminant validity.

Conclusion

The results confirm that all constructs in the study demonstrate strong internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The high composite reliability values suggest the constructs are reliable, while the AVE values above 0.7 confirm they measure their intended concepts effectively. Since the square root of AVE for each construct is greater than its highest correlation, discriminant validity is successfully established, indicating that each construct is distinct and valid for further analysis.

Structural Model:

Testing research hypotheses:

Table:3, Testing Research Hypotheses: (n=100)					
HYPOTHESES TESTING					
Path and Hypotheses	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
H1: Organizational Demographics - > DEI Policies	0.654	0.660	0.071	9.259	0.013
H2: DEI Policies - > Women's Career Growth	0.245	0.258	0.156	1.573	0.116
H3: DEI Policies - > Women's Safety	0.352	0.352	0.098	3.600	0.000
H4: Organizational Culture of DEI Policies - > Women's Career Growth	0.564	0.549	0.130	4.330	0.000
H5: Organizational Culture of DEI Policies - > Women's Safety	0.546	0.542	0.096	5.671	0.000

H1: Organizational Demographics → DEI Policies

- **Original Sample (O): 0.654 | T-Statistics: 9.259 | P-Value: 0.013**
- **Interpretation:** Organizational demographics (such as company size, industry type, and geographic location) **significantly influence** the adoption and implementation of DEI policies.
- A **positive coefficient (0.654)** suggests that larger or more diverse organizations are more likely to adopt and enforce comprehensive DEI policies.
- Since the **T-statistic is 9.259 (>1.96)** and **p-value is 0.013 (<0.05)**, the relationship is statistically significant, confirming that **organizational demographics play a crucial role in shaping DEI initiatives**.

H2: DEI Policies → Women's Career Growth

- **Original Sample (O): 0.245 | T-Statistics: 1.573 | P-Value: 0.116**
- **Interpretation:** The relationship between **DEI policies and women's career growth is positive but not statistically significant** (p-value >0.05).
- The **low coefficient (0.245)** suggests that while DEI policies contribute to career growth, they alone may not be the primary driving factor.
- **Possible Explanation:** Career growth may depend on additional factors such as mentorship, leadership support, and bias-free evaluation processes, which may not be fully covered under general DEI policies.

H3: DEI Policies → Women's Safety

- **Original Sample (O): 0.352 | T-Statistics: 3.600 | P-Value: 0.000**
- **Interpretation:** DEI policies have a **strong and statistically significant positive impact on women's safety** in the workplace.



- A **positive coefficient (0.352)** and **highly significant p-value (0.000)** indicate that organizations with **clear and well-enforced DEI policies** tend to provide a safer working environment for women.
- **Key Implication:** Strong DEI policies ensure mechanisms for addressing harassment, discrimination, and workplace security, enhancing **both physical and psychological safety** for women.

H4: Organizational Culture of DEI Policies → Women's Career Growth

- **Original Sample (O): 0.564 | T-Statistics: 4.330 | P-Value: 0.000**
- **Interpretation:** Organizational culture plays a critical role in mediating the impact of DEI policies on women's career growth.
- The **high coefficient (0.564)** and **strong significance (p=0.000)** indicate that when DEI values are deeply embedded in an organization's culture, women experience **greater career advancement opportunities**.
- **Key Implication:** While DEI policies alone may not directly impact career growth (H2 was not significant), their effectiveness increases when supported by a workplace culture that promotes equity, mentorship, and leadership commitment.

H5: Organizational Culture of DEI Policies → Women's Safety

- **Original Sample (O): 0.546 | T-Statistics: 5.671 | P-Value: 0.000**
- **Interpretation:** A strong DEI culture significantly enhances women's safety at the workplace.
- With a **high coefficient (0.546)** and **strong statistical significance (p=0.000)**, this finding suggests that organizations where **leaders actively advocate for DEI and inclusion practices create safer environments for women**.
- **Key Implication:** A positive DEI culture ensures that policies are not just **documented but actively practiced**, leading to an improved sense of safety among women employees.

Significance of the Study

This research is particularly relevant for:

- **Corporate Leaders & HR Professionals:** Understanding how to design and implement DEI policies that create real impact rather than performative inclusivity.
- **Policy Makers:** Identifying gaps in existing labour laws and corporate governance frameworks to drive legislative improvements.
- **Women in IT:** Highlighting the barriers they face and the conditions necessary for equitable career advancement and workplace safety.

By providing empirical evidence on the efficacy of DEI policies, this study contributes to the broader discourse on gender equity, corporate inclusivity, and workplace transformation in the IT sector.

7. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study emphasize the critical role of DEI policies and organizational culture in shaping a safe and fair workplace for women. While organizational demographics significantly influence the adoption of DEI policies, their effectiveness depends on how deeply they are embedded within the organization's culture. The study highlights the following key insights:

1. **DEI policies alone are not enough to drive women's career growth:** organizational culture acts as a crucial enabler. Companies that go beyond policy implementation and actively promote inclusivity and leadership support see higher career advancement for women.
2. **A strong DEI culture fosters psychological and physical safety:** by ensuring that policies are not just in place but actively practiced and reinforced through leadership commitment and open dialogue.
3. **Women's career growth is influenced by multiple factors:** while DEI policies provide a foundation, mentorship, unbiased promotion processes, and leadership advocacy play a major role in ensuring equitable advancement opportunities.
4. **Workplace safety improves when DEI values are deeply integrated** into the organization's culture: a workplace that encourages open discussions, has robust safety mechanisms, and ensures fair grievance redressal processes leads to greater security for women employees.
5. **Organizational demographics shape DEI implementation:** with larger, more diverse organizations being more likely to adopt and enforce comprehensive DEI policies.

In summary, the study confirms that DEI policies alone cannot drive meaningful change unless organizational culture supports and reinforces them. Companies must focus on not only successfully implementing DEI policies but also embedding them into everyday workplace practices to enhance women's safety and career growth effectively.



8. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Strengthening DEI Policies for Impactful Change

1. **Enhance Leadership Commitment to DEI:** Leadership advocacy is crucial in ensuring DEI policies translate into real action. Organizations should establish accountability frameworks where leaders actively promote equitable hiring, career development, and safety measures.
2. **Improve Career Growth Pathways for Women:** Organizations should ensure that mentorship programs, unbiased promotion criteria, and leadership training opportunities are available to women at all levels.

Embedding DEI Values into Organizational Culture

3. **Encourage an Inclusive Work Environment:** Creating platforms for open discussions on diversity, equity, and inclusion helps build a more supportive culture where women feel safe and empowered.
4. **Implement Transparent Safety Mechanisms:** Establish robust reporting channels and workplace safety initiatives that reinforce zero tolerance for harassment and discrimination.

Leveraging Organizational Demographics for Tailored DEI Strategies

5. **Customize DEI Strategies Based on Organizational Size and Industry:** Larger organizations may require structured DEI programs, while smaller firms can benefit from personalized DEI training and awareness campaigns.

By implementing these recommendations and refining DEI models, organizations can create a truly inclusive and equitable workplace that empowers women, enhances safety, and fosters sustainable career growth.

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