

Internship Report On
Exploration of Challenges in Managing Diversified Workforce in
Bangladesh During the COVID-19 Pandemic

By

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An internship report submitted to the BRAC Business School in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Business Administration

BRAC Business School
BRAC University
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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The internship report submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The report does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The report does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Letter of Transmittal

Dr. Md Asadul Islam
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66 Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212

Subject: Submission of Internship Report

Dear Sir,

This is my pleasure to inform you that I am writing this report on “*Exploration of Challenges in Managing Diversified Workforce in Bangladesh During the COVID-19 Pandemic*”. I have successfully completed my internship at Square Toiletries Limited where I was given the opportunity to work in the Sales Department under the supervision of the trade marketing executive. I have attempted my best to finish the report with the essential data in a significant compact and comprehensive manner as possible.

I would like to sincerely thank my peers and professors who have supported and helped me to complete this report.

Sincerely,

Nowshin Anjum
ID: 18104268
BRAC Business School
BRAC University
Date: October 25, 2022

Executive Summary

Firstly, in this report, I have shared my experience of working as an intern at Square Toiletries Limited. In the first chapter, all the necessary information related to the internship is provided. As an intern, I was required to perform some specific responsibilities that enabled me to get a first-hand experience of real-life work culture.

Secondly, this report illustrates an in-depth overview of the company as well as its day to day practises such as management, marketing, operations to present their effect on the overall operations. Moreover, the report also provides competitive analysis such as Porter's five forces and SWOT analysis of the organization. Additionally, it provides some critical recommendations based on the competitive analysis.

Finally, the third chapter provides a project on the diversity management during the pandemic in Bangladesh. The purpose of the study is to understand the difficulties of managing a diversified workforce in midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study is based on the qualitative data collected through interviews of nine Bangladeshi management professionals from different industries. The findings suggest that the personal prejudice against gender, and age plays a vital role in hindering inclusive workplace. Moreover, generational gap and power gap among employees contribute to lack of communication and transparency. In addition to that, the socio-cultural situation of Bangladesh is one of the major concerns working against the workplace diversity. Further, most organizations addressed the problem by providing temporary solutions. This study provides several practical implications to propose good practices of workplace inclusion as it may create robust social and economic impact on Bangladesh.

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List of Acronyms

STL	Square Toiletries Limited
FMCG	Fast Moving Consumer Goods
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
MIS	Management Information Systems
HR	Human Resource
QMS	Quality Management Systems
MNC	Multinational Company
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
R&D	Research and development
AMA	American Marketing Association
IBM	International Business Machines
ILO	International Labor Organization
IFC	International Finance Corporation
MBS	Monash Business School

Chapter 1

Overview of Internship

1.1 Information of the Intern

Name	Nowshin Anjum
Student ID	18104268
Program	Bachelor of Business Administration
Major	Human Resource Management

1.2 Internship Information

Period	3 Months (1 st June – 31 st August)
Company Name	Square Toiletries Limited
Department/ Division	Sales Department
Address	Rupayan Center (11 th Floor). 72 Mohakhali CA Dhaka-1212

1.2.1 Internship Company Supervisor's Information Name and Position

Name	Kazi Reza E Rabbi
Position	Trade Marketing Executive, Square Toiletries Limited

1.2.2 Job Scope – Job Description/Duties/Responsibilities

As a sales intern, my primary function was to aid the Sales and Marketing Professionals with their regular trade marketing responsibilities. The responsibilities that I had while working at Square Toiletries Limited are given as follows:

- Assisting the executives with the field teams regarding program verification
- Following up with the regular trade program updates

- Speeding up program claim settlements by maintaining regular communication
- Filling up and preserving program documents for further requirement
- Performing any other duties required by Supervisor/ Management Head

1.3 Internship Outcomes

1.3.1 Student's contribution to the company

I have completed my 3-month internship with Square Toiletries Limited (STL) where I executed divergent functions under the sales department of the company. My primary responsibility was to support the field team by maintaining regular communication. I was expected to inform, take updates, and provide overall management instruction to the field team. Moreover, I had the responsibility of following up with them regarding their progress in the programs. As a part of my internship responsibilities, I communicated with responsible personnel regularly to speed up the claim settlements of the previous programs. Additionally, I performed the duties of filling up and preserving documents using Microsoft Excel. Apart from this, I diligently acted on my supervisor's instruction to perform any other duties required by the management.

1.3.2 Benefits to the student

During my three-month internship, I got a glimpse of working in the rush of sales department. Working in sales and trade management has flourished and enriched my speaking skill to a great extent. As I was to maintain formal communication with my supervisor as well as other colleagues, I improved my verbal skill at a great length. Moreover, communication conducted through telephone calls, WhatsApp, and e-mails, helped me to boost up my daily verbal and written skills. Hence, this experience has a positive impact on my confidence level. Additionally, working for one of the most renowned FMCG company, helped me learn about

the industry and corporate culture. As STL strictly follows the office hours (8.30 am to 5.30 pm), I learned to become more punctual and disciplined. Before joining the company, I sometimes missed my scheduled classes, or came late. However, this internship has taught me the importance of being punctual, responsible, and disciplined about my work.

Again, this internship experience has taught me to maintain a cheerful outlook. As STL treats the interns similarly as the regular employees, fitting into the culture in that brief period may seem overwhelming. However, I learned from my supervisor that it is important to remain positive to get the best out of this experience. During the internship, I learned to be patient and positive even when the work, or the overall situation seemed difficult. Moreover, this internship opportunity has helped me to get better at my computer skills such as using Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word with ease. It also benefitted my typing skills both in English and Bangla language. In addition to upgrading my technical and soft skills, I got the opportunity to gain experience about the FMCG industry, corporate culture, and ways to network with experienced personnel at STL.

1.3.3 Problems/Difficulties faced during the internship

For the first few weeks, there was truly little work assigned for me. As such, I got bored and confused about how I can learn from this internship effectively. Since one of my major responsibilities were to communicate with the field team, the existing scarcity of telephone in the office made the task even challenging for me. Further, at the beginning of my internship, I was hesitant to ask question as it was completely an unfamiliar environment. However, over the time I gained more confidence to ask questions whenever I needed clarification. Moreover, a new working environment hit me on the nerve, and I became very anxious whenever I felt confused about anything. Additionally, I faced difficulties to maintain the 8.30 to 5.30 work schedule on a regular basis and my personal interests at the same time.

1.3.4 Recommendation

Working and studying at Square Toiletries Limited was indeed an exceptional experience. Though STL provides a good opportunity to students to learn from them, there are a few things that it can improve its overall internship program. Since the work culture provides a hands-on training for the future, I believe having a more structured planning for interns can help the interns learn, understand, and adapt in the new environment with ease. Besides, structured work plan will not only help the interns, but also be of great support for the line managers to provide mentorship. Moreover, providing constructive feedback should be given a priority. Since interns are working to learn from the real professionals about the real world, it is important to give feedback that matters and it will be great, if the company receives equally constructive feedback from its interns. Finally, STL can provide a far better internship experience by giving them the opportunity to network with the experienced professionals as well as other interns so that they can boost their connection for future opportunities.

Chapter 2

The Organization

2.1 Introduction

This chapter includes the overview of the internship company- Square Toiletries Limited (STL). It also includes the management practices followed by STL. Moreover, introduction of their marketing practices is also a part of this chapter. Furthermore, it covers operations management and information system practices of STL. Besides, this chapter includes industry and competitive analysis. Finally, after comprising summary and conclusions, recommendations are also added in this chapter.

2.2 Company Overview

Initially founded in 1988 as a separate division of Square Pharmaceuticals, Square Toiletries was transformed into a private limited company in 1994. Since then, Square Toiletries Limited (STL) has been growing rapidly and today it is one of the largest Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) companies in Bangladesh. The company is currently marketing twenty separate brands in different segments while manufacturing more than fifty products in the market. Major brands of the company are Jui, Chaka, Senora, Kool, Meril, Sepnil, Supermom and Magic. According to the founding chairperson of STL, Chowdhury (2007), the word 'Square' signifies accuracy and perfection which played a vital role in the naming of the company. Emerging from Square Pharmaceuticals, Square Toiletries Limited has been serving people with their care products for the last 34 years. Starting from children to women, STL has been relentlessly sustaining the quality of its products and services.

2.2.1 Vision

We attempt to understand the unique needs of the consumer and translate that needs into products which satisfies them in the form of quality products, prominent level of service and affordable price range in a unique way (Square Toiletries Limited, n.d.)

2.2.2 Mission

- To treasure consumer understanding as one of our most valued assets and thereby exerting every effort to understand consumers' dynamic requirements to enable us in offering maximum satisfaction.
- To offer consumer products at affordable price by strictly maintaining uncompromising stance with quality. With continuous R&D and innovation we strive to make our products complying with international quality standards.
- To maintain a congenial working environment to build and develop the core asset of STL – its people. As well as to pursue for elevated level of employee motivation and satisfaction.
- To uphold the responsibility towards the government and society with utmost ethical standards as well as make every effort for a social order devoid of malpractices, anti-environmental behaviors, unethical and corruptive dealings.

2.2.3 Manufacturing Unit

Square Toiletries ensures international standards in their products and their major products are developed by their state-of-the-art R&D department. The sole objectives of the company's R&D department are-

- to establish a deep understanding of consumers, their habits and product needs

- to develop the capabilities to acquire, develop and apply technology across STL’s broad array of product categories
- to acquire the ability of making ‘connections’ between consumers’ wants and what technology can deliver

2.2.4 Global Partners of Square Toiletries Limited

Apart from delivering and developing quality products in the local market, STL is also exporting its finest products to thirteen countries worldwide namely- UAE, Germany, UK, Australia, Malaysia, and such. Different companies of these foreign countries are collaborating with STL for their products. To make the process of creating optimal routes for target customer more universal and global, STL has formed agreements with the following international companies listed in Table I:

Table I: Companies with which STL has formed agreements

Country	Company
Germany	Cognis
Germany	IFF
Malaysia	Uniqema
Singapore	Fermentich
United Kingdom	Clariant

2.3 Management Practices

2.3.1 Leadership Style

According to Terry (1968), leadership refers to the relationship in which the leader motivates the followers to perform tasks together on their own will to attain that the leader desires. Square Toiletries Limited (STL) strictly follows a mixed form of leadership. Since they opt for nurturing the employee's creativity during planning different programs or projects, democratic or participative leadership style is followed. Democratic leadership is known as the leadership approach that involves contribution of all team members in decision making process (The University of Arizona, 2022). However, STL follows autocratic leadership in the execution phase as it allows the leaders to prioritize expectation and define results (IMD, 2021). The reason behind following a mix style lies in employee knowledge, set of skills, and assigned tasks. Democratic leadership works best for executive level professionals and top-level management team due to their high experience and participation in the planning phase. However, autocratic leadership is best suited for entry level employees and the field team they need constant direction and motivation from the supervisors to perform their task diligently. Moreover, their skill level and assigned task work best for the 'Do as you are told' form of leadership.

2.3.2 Recruitment and selection process

Recruitment and selection are the process of finding and choosing the 'right' individual from the 'wrong' individuals to fit into a particular office role. This process involves making predictions about future behavior and organizational needs so that decisions can be made about which candidate will be the most suitable for a specific job (Newell, 2005). The human resource department of Square Toiletries Limited manages all the recruitment and selection procedures. From advertising job postings to selecting potential employees, STL makes sure to pull talented

and energetic people in the team. According to the needs, job advertisements are posted on job portals by the HR team. However, they also practice the recruitment based on internal reference as well. Entry, mid and senior level management staff, field force, executives and non-executive positions are typically offered in marketing, sales, human resource, MIS, and other departments. STL follows a vigorous recruitment process to select the best candidates. Hence, it requires a candidate to sit for an exam and a three-step interview to successfully land a job in this company. A candidate must pass all the steps in the requirement process. In every hire, STL ensures all the necessary information reaches to every applicant through email and calls. Further, to select the best candidates, STL ensures to give full priority to merit. Additionally, each applicant's past professional history is thoroughly investigated. Not only that, an applicant's physical and mental health is also taken in consideration. Finally, STL believes in giving equal opportunity to everyone. As a result, the whole recruitment process is open to all.

2.3.3 Compensation System

According to Martocchio (2011), compensation represents monetary, non-monetary benefits employees receive and their psychological state after performing the assigned jobs. Human Resource Managers of Square Toiletries Limited construct salary and benefits programs to incentivize their workers to perform effectively and to remain engaged throughout their careers. In addition to their standard remuneration, STL provides its workers with other advantages that are uncommon in the industry. These benefits are listed as follows:

On a regular basis, each employee at STL receives a modest base salary, which is dependent on their experience and credentials. In addition, workers get an additional wage boost if their knowledge is valuable, and they are a valuable resource for the organization. In addition to their base wage, they get two holiday bonuses every year. In most organizations, workers are

entitled to two holiday bonuses, but at STL, they get three additional incentives based on their performance and regardless of their position. Moreover, STL provides all female workers and staff at the Executive level with official transport through high-quality AC buses that are dispersed around the Dhaka metropolitan area. Additionally, transportation for senior officials is provided via personal benefits. In STL, all workers, regardless of rank, get completely subsidized lunch facilities. In addition to lunch, staff get tea twice a day. STL's facilities are well maintained and developed with all elements of keeping appropriate cleanliness in mind.

Further, there exists the possibility of earning leave. Every employee is entitled to a set amount of leave, which they may utilize, as necessary. If they do not need the leaves, they may get an equivalent amount of cash. STL employees get a 50% off while getting treatment from Square Hospital Ltd. They also get 25% off when buying products from Square Pharmaceuticals, Square Food and Beverage and Square Toiletries products.

2.3.4 Training and Development

Training and development are a strategic tool to improve business outcomes by initiating educational activities within an organization to that are designed to improve job performance of an individual or group (IBM, n.d.). In Square Toiletries Limited, two types of training systems are existent. One being the Quality Management Systems (QMS) training and the other is On-the-job training. As STL is an ISO certified company, the management arranges different quality trainings and workshops for maintaining their company standard. Moreover, there are also arrangements for on-the-job training. For example, if someone needs excess training, management will arrange something for that employee. The training on psychometry, legal and construction safety were conducted recently.

2.3.5 Performance Appraisal System

Performance Appraisal is a tool to track individual contribution and performance against goals set by any organization and to determine individual strengths as well as opportunities for improvements and tested whether the goals are achieved as basis for the company's future planning and development (Daoanis, 2012). There are two types of appraisals. One is yearly appraisal. It is a self-appraisal process. In this process, the appraisee is given a form and eventually, he/she must rate them on a scale of ten. The assessor can be the head of the department or supervisor. He/she will also rate them out on the same criteria. A minor difference of one or two is normalized in this process. The other type of appraisal is year-long appraisal. This type of appraisal keeps on going throughout the entire year. The exception is seen in case of a new employee. In such appraisal process, a new employee is assessed after six months in front of a formal board.

2.4 Marketing Practices

The American Marketing Association (AMA, 2017) defines marketing as the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large. Square Toiletries Limited is one of the major companies in the FMCG industry in Bangladesh. To manage all its marketing activities, the company developed a full-blown marketing department. The marketing department is responsible for taking important actions that sets apart STL from other competitors. As for their marketing strategy, STL has developed twenty different brands of products in skin care, health and hygiene, hair care, baby products etc. According to Kotler, et al. (2017), brands are powerful assets of a company that represent everything that a product or service means to consumers. Since the company highly value customer needs, it ensures that

each product is of quality. Additionally, STL focuses on packaging of these products by continuously designing and developing to appeal to its customer base. Though STL believes in providing quality products, the pricing of the products is much affordable for the consumers. As the target base of STL is mainly the lower and upper middle-class residents of Bangladesh, low-cost pricing strategy is adopted to gain the market advantage. A low-cost pricing strategy offers a relatively low price to stimulate demand and market share (MBS, n.d.). Not only that, various offers, discounts are offered to the consumers. Since MNC's like Unilever and Marico are top competitors, STL must adhere to the market price as well to compete in the market.

Moreover, to reach the potential customers with ease, it has built different distribution channels to provide adequate number of products all over the country. According to AMA (2017), distribution refers to the extent of market coverage as well as the transportation of products to customers. STL ensures the visibility and feasibility of the products to gain the most profit. The products are placed in the most common sequence of manufacturer to distributor to retailer to finally customers. Hence, STL has authorized 261 distributors to ensure accurate product delivery in every region. Moreover, it has also placed its products in online stores such as Daraz, Shajgoj etc. to gain online visibility. The marketing department is also responsible for product promotion. Promotional activities include tactics to encourage and influence short-term purchase (AMA, 2017). For its promotional activities, it still focuses on advertising which is a communication intended to inform and influence customers (Bullmore, n.d.). STL still focuses on traditional form of advertising such as television commercials, billboards, and newspaper ads. However, it has also shifted to the digital promotional activities on social media platforms. To stand out in the market, STL often creates advertisements that depict social issues such as domestic violence to create awareness. The marketing team critically analyses the potential lead customers with certain demographic profile. For instance, for the brand

Senora, they have come up with a new product called Teen that is targeted and designed for the adolescent girls.

Furthermore, STL follows multi-branding strategy for most of its products. A multi-branding strategy is adopted to create, shape, and advertise the portfolio of brands so that a company can offer diversified and unique features of products to customers (Giannoulakis & Apostolopoulou, 2011). It has twenty different products under different brand names targeting different markets. However, these brands have multiple products. For example, Meril baby brand offers lotion, oil, and toothpaste specially designed for infants. Similarly, Sepnil offers sanitizers, face masks, hand soap, disinfectant and antibacterial soap targeting a different market. Finally, there are also some marketing issues that hinder the company's ability to maximize profit. There is a certain product under Senora brand called Senora Ultrathin that is widely marketed in different media. However, it could not outperform its competitor, Whisper. Not only that, despite its promotional activities, it could not reach to its potential customers. As a result, despite being a developed product, it could not reach to STL's expectations.

2.5 Financial Performance and Accounting Practices

2.5.1 Financial Performance

A team of professionals is responsible to handle the accounts department of STL. The team deals with all the business-related transactions complying with the rules and regulations of the company. Moreover, according to requirements of the stakeholders, the employees prepare necessary financial reports. The company's expenditures, bills, debts, and financial statements are recorded and kept up to date. Their financial reports give investors and stakeholders the insights of revenue generation, profit margin, and financial obligations. According to STL's annual 2020-2021 financial statement, the current ratio reached to 1.52 that means the company

has 1.52 BDT worth of current assets for every 1 BDT worth of current liabilities. Current ratio refers to the company's ability to pay short-term financial obligation (Durrah et.al., 2016). Moreover, according to the annual report 2020-2021, the profit margin of STL increased to 8.3%. The profit margin indicates the profitability of the company as it is the ratio of company's profit divided by its revenue (Jayathilaka, 2020). The annual report also indicates its inventory turnover as 4. Inventory turnover ratio measures the efficiency of a company on how it uses its inventory by dividing the cost of goods sold by the average inventory value during the period (Breivik et.al., 2021).

2.5.2 Accounting Practices

The accounts department of STL keeps extensive records of financial data for each transaction. In doing so the employees follows an accounting cycle that comprises of identifying and analyzing transaction, posting transaction to ledger, preparing an unadjusted trial balance, adjusting the entries after a period, and finalize an adjusted trial balance. Accounting cycle is the process of identifying, sorting, and analyzing transaction of a business within an accounting time period ("Accounting Cycle", n.d.). Moreover, STL employees follow the applicable accounting and financial standards in preparing the financial statements. These financial statements are prepared in accordance with Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Rules, 1987. The accounts department also records previous financial documents such as balance sheets, annual reports, revenue growth, income growth for forecasting future transactions.

2.6 Operations Management and Information System Practices

Operations management refers to the area of management that is concerned with controlling and designing the process of production of goods or services (The Economic Times, n.d.). Since STL is concerned about quality policy and determined to utilize its resources to get maximum results, the employees are accountable to maintain efficiency in all activities. To maintain quality of the products, STL has formed a separate department to monitor and control overall production. Moreover, STL products are certified for maintaining international standards ISO 9001:2015 (international standard that specifies the requirements for a quality management system) (International Organization for Standardization, 2015) and ISO 22716:2007 (international standard of good manufacturing practices for cosmetic manufacturing industry) (International Organization for Standardization, 2007). Under the supervision of the quality control team, each quality control tests are reviewed for research purposes and continuous development of the manufacturing process. Besides, Square Toiletries Limited has formed MIS department for the purpose of collecting, storing, and sharing information. MIS team uses a specific software for office management. This software keeps data of the tools and equipment. This department ensures the proper allocation of these resources and keeps the information for further use. Moreover, there is a separate software called SPA is used for the purpose of collecting sales related information. It is partly maintained by the MIS department. To maximize the accuracy of the field teams sales activities, SPA is used. However, this information is then processed and shared with sales executives and officers to carry on their respective activities.

Further, STL has two manufacturing units in Rupshi and Pabna. To ensure maximum efficiency, regular maintenance is necessary. These fully automated machines are frequently checked and maintained for manufacturing high quality products.

2.7 Industry and Competitive Analysis

2.7.1 Porter's Five Forces Analysis

Porter's five forces analysis is an analytical tool to identify and analyze the five competitive forces that a company faces and helps to understand the economic value these forces share (Porter, 1979).

- **Rivalry among existing competitors:** Square Toiletries Limited faces intense competition with other existing MNC's and local companies. Among them, Unilever, ACI, Reckitt, Kohinoor Chemicals, Marico are the top competitors in the same industry. These companies produce similar products, as a result, STL must be on high alert to get the competitive advantage over them (Tahmid, 2021)
- **Bargaining power of suppliers:** STL faces medium bargaining power of suppliers. As it aims to get high quality raw materials from foreign suppliers for their products, it is crucial to maintain effective negotiation. However, its selection of raw materials makes it difficult to overcome the bargaining power of the suppliers (STL, n.d.).
- **Bargaining power of customers:** Since there are more than twenty existing brands for the similar products, it is easier for customers to switch between brands. As a result, customers have a strong bargaining power. Though, STL produces high quality products, it must adhere to focused low-cost strategy to pull customers.
- **Threat of new entrants:** STL faces moderate threat in this aspect as it already has a loyal customer base. Moreover, it continues to develop its products to limit the factor of imitation. It is expected that if it can maintain its brand reputation through continuous development, it will take time for the new companies to pose serious threat to STL.

- **Threat of substitutes:** There is a moderate threat of substitute products. However, STL can improve its R&D to create and expand the business further by making the substitute products as well. However, tampons and menstrual cups are already posing a threat for the brand Senora. Moreover, availability of olive oil, castor oil is limiting the use of Jui Coconut hair Oil.

2.7.2 SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis is a strategic planning technique that helps an organization to identify its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to business or project planning (Thompson et al., 2020). Table II depicts the SWOT Analysis of Square Toiletries Limited.

Table II: SWOT Analysis of STL

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong brand reputation • Loyal customer base • Ample financial resources • Cost advantages over rivals • Adequate distribution capacity 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product line comparatively narrow • Lack of new products for new users • Inadequacy of management department • Underdeveloped R&D team • Internal operating problems
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand product line in new market • Entering direct online business • Growing in a new geographic market • Meet rising buyer demand for the industry 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intense competition with MNC's • Growing bargaining power of customers and suppliers • Increased energy shortage (load shedding) • Change in customer preference

Based on the SWOT Analysis, Square Toiletries Limited has a strong brand reputation, loyal customer base, enough financial resources, and able to provide quality products at a lower price than its rivals. Moreover, it has the capacity to reach a lot of customers through its wide distribution channels, STL has a competitive advantage due to these strengths (STL, n.d.). Though STL is a strong competitor in the market, its weaknesses such as narrow product line, lack of new products, managerial incapacity, underdeveloped R&D team, and other internal issues make it vulnerable to its competitors. However, it still has opportunities such as developing new products for new customer base, grabbing online market to gain more profits (STL, n.d.). Though to gain market lead, STL must tackle the emerging threats of competing against MNCs, increasing bargaining power of the suppliers and customers. Finally, the recent energy shortage and ever-changing consumer preference are major threats for STL.

2.8 Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to give a brief discussion about the selected organization, its vision, mission, management, marketing, and operational practices as well as to provide a competitive analysis in the existing industry. As the selected company is Square Toiletries Limited, the first few sub chapters give the glimpse of STL's growth in the FMCG industry. Moreover, it shows that STL is far more interested to learn about the consumer needs and come up with superior products at affordable prices. This chapter discusses that It follows a mixed leadership, comprising of participative and autocratic depending on the knowledge, skill, and hierarchy of the employees. Additionally, this chapter explains that STL practices fair recruitment policies to find the most meritorious candidates as well as compensation terms along with the base pay and extra benefits such as transportation, lunch, earned leave, bonuses, and discounts.

Not only that STL provides quality management systems (QMS) training as well as on the job training to the employees and they are appraised based on their performance on a regular basis. Furthermore, this chapter shows that the marketing mix of STL is about providing budget friendly, quality goods that are well visible and feasible for the people from upper to lower middle-income families. Again, it points out that this company is a multi-branded company in targeting different markets. Besides, STL has formed operations and MIS departments to achieve maximum efficiency in terms of maintaining quality as well as information processing, storing, and distributing among stakeholders.

In the final part of this chapter, competitive analysis such as Porter's five forces factors are discussed that indicates that STL is a strong competitor as except for competitive rivalry, it faces low to medium threats in other aspects. Finally, this chapter is concluded by showing a SWOT analysis of STL that points out its strength in brand reputation, financial aspect, customer base. However, it also points out that lack of development can be its biggest weakness. Moreover, factors concerning power outage and change in customer preference in the market full of competitors can be threatening for the company. However, having these weaknesses and threats STL still has an opportunity to become a market leader by expansion of their product line to a new market.

2.9 Recommendation

The SWOT Analysis of STL brings out some of its important opportunities and challenges. Since STL already possess a strong brand reputation, it has a tremendous opportunity to expand its product line through innovation. Hence, developing a fully functional research and development team can be beneficial to innovate new products to grab the attention of a new market base. According to Porter's Five Forces Analysis, some brands of STL has the risk of substitute products. However, this risk can be overcome by coming up with new products which will be only possible by investing more into development of its existing products. Moreover, the threat of changing consumer preference can be turned into an opportunity if STL takes necessary initiatives to create new products to meet the demands. As it has the benefit of strong local customer base and ample financial resources, STL should take the leap of faith to enter the global market which will create a new milestone. By growing in different geographic markets, it will be able to gain competitive advantage over other local companies and be able to compete with the growing MNCs. Additionally, online based business can create an opportunity as the new generation's growing attention to online shopping. Creating an official website with purchase options can attract both local and global customers. To achieve success on a global scale, it should opt for digital marketing as well as deliver innovative and quality products. Finally, STL should be aware of the trends, and changes taking place in the industry so that they can take preventive measures to any sort of failures and be at the top of the market.

Chapter 3

Exploration of Challenges in Managing Diversified Workforce in Bangladesh During the COVID-19 Pandemic

3.1 Introduction

This chapter includes the background and literature review of diversity management in different countries before and during the pandemic. It also presents the objectives of this paper. The methodology followed in this research is also described in this chapter. Moreover, the findings of the study and analysis are also depicted in this chapter. Additionally, it presents an overall summary and conclusions of the study. Finally, the chapter concludes by adding recommendations and implications on the challenges in diversity management.

3.1.1 Background of the Study

Diversity is one of the most popular business topics around the world. Despite its popularity among professionals and scholars, constructing a firm definition for this term remains complex due to different perspectives (Coulter and Robbins, 2014). Traditional dictionary definitions refer to diversity as variety, difference, or multidisciplinary. Additionally, one of the definitions refers to the practice of inclusion of people from a range of social, or ethnic backgrounds, and of different genders, ages, or sexual orientations (Saxena, 2014). Though traditional definitions show a stereotypical overview of the term, in this 21st century, the meaning of diversity in the business realm has evolved to be much more than the superficial uniqueness of individuals (Coulter and Robbins, 2014).

A diversified workforce assimilates individuals with uniqueness and similarities (Saxena, 2014). As opposed to the popular view of diversity, the new millennium has adapted to consider

both similar and unique characteristics of employees to achieve business success. Moreover, a diversified workforce not only encompasses employees with demographic differences, but also implies values, ideas, personalities, and work preferences (Coulter and Robbins, 2014). Demographic differences are deemed as the tip of the iceberg whereas the variety of inner values and qualities such as negotiation, communication, and behavior can profoundly impact an organization (Coulter and Robbins, 2014). In short, workforce diversity claims the inclusiveness of a range of people at an organization from different or similar backgrounds with distinguishable or parallel inner characteristics (Saxena, 2014).

3.1.2 Literature Review

Challenges in Managing Diversity in Organizations (Global Perspective)

Managing a diversified workforce comes with great challenges. From communication gaps to conflict resolutions, managers must face difficult hurdles to keep peace at work. Firstly, discrimination against minorities is a major issue. The New Indian Express (2019) reported that in Singapore, about 22.3% of Malays and 20.8% of Indians felt discriminatory behavior while applying for a job due to their ethnic and religious identity. Similarly, another study shows that about 31% of young African Americans were denied work engagement and other discrimination at work (Lloyed, 2021). Age is also an indicator as black men older than age 40 (about 17%) reported discrimination due to racial identity (Lloyed, 2021). Apart from racial and ethnic discrimination, there are reportedly other forms of personal bias such as older employees being more subjected to layoffs due to their high payment (Levitz & Shishkin, 2019). Moreover, personal bias also explains why women struggle to climb the corporate ladder, enter the C-Suite, or choose to remove themselves from the workplace altogether. According to a 2015 Pew Research Center survey, 40 percent of respondents said there were contradictory standards for women who wanted entry into the high-ranking executive roles or

the C-suite (McCormic, 2015). Further, Google admitted that personal and unconscious bias has affected their selection of executives as in 2013, only three of its 36 executives were women (Guynn, 2015 and Manjoo, 2014). For example, the former CMO of Fox International Channels, Liz Dolan publicly resigned as a member of the board of directors of Quiksilver, Inc., an outdoor sports lifestyle company. In an article that ran in Fortune, Dolan stated that unconscious gender bias was the reason she felt left out and compelled to turn in her resignation after serving as the board's only female representative for 18 months (Dolan, 2015). According to Libin (2021), for women returning to work after giving birth, face payment drops by 30%. Additionally, child-free men get paid 20% more than men with families. These issues create employee dissatisfaction and make it difficult enough to maintain diversity (Libin, 2021).

Another major issue is existing prejudice. Stereotyping is a form of prejudice. Both prejudice and stereotyping can lead to exclusion and discrimination in a certain community (Coulter and Robbins, 2014). Furthermore, the age gap plays a significant role in communication between employees. For example, a study on the nursing community reveals that generational differences between nurses can lead to potential conflict. As generation X and millennial nurses respect baby boomer leaders, however, they seek a more work-life balance approach and do not encourage overtime. These unresolved conflicts can later become a major issue if not resolved with care (Sherman, 2006). Moreover, the issue of the glass ceiling is also concerning. Though men and women enter the workforce at the same rate. However, fewer women (only about 2%) make it to the CEO or other managerial position (Coulter and Robbins, 2014).

Challenges in Managing Diversity in Organizations (Bangladesh Perspective)

In Bangladesh, culture plays a significant role in managing workforce diversity. Due to the cultural aspect of the high-power distance between subordinates and managers, employees tend to accept that their superiors do not share all information which potentially leads to a degree of lack of transparency and misunderstanding (Abdullah et al., 2011). Another challenge major challenge is dealing with unconscious bias in the workplace. It has become a practice in many organizations to recruit or promote employees based on personal preferences (Hassan, 2019). Moreover, local, and multinational organizations functioning in Bangladesh, face difficulties in restructuring their management culture to accommodate new recruits (Kar, 2017). For example, managing flexible working hours, providing maternity leaves, and accommodating people with disabilities are still deemed difficult due to corporate cultures. Furthermore, the gap between male and female employees in managerial positions showcases the lack of diversity in higher positions. For example, the lack of female employees in top managerial positions showcases the lack of diversity in the development sector of Bangladesh (Zebin, 2021). Moreover, trans workers faced harassment and bullying at the workplace. They also reported that they experienced feeling left out and their ideas being rejected due to their identity (Hafiz et al., 2022).

Managing Diversity During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaken up the way of business industries overnight. Its effect thus came upon the management of diversity as well. In this difficult time, nine out of ten executives face difficulty to implement their diversity and inclusion strategies (Ferguson, 2020). McKinsey & Company's research on women, LGBTQ+ employees, and people of color indicates that only one in six people felt supported by their employers. In addition, the research shows that women in the US faced more workloads and were 2.6 times as likely to report

serious mental health issues as compared to their male counterparts (Ferguson, 2020). The pandemic also affected working mothers in a negative way. About 4.2 million women predominantly, African American and Latina women was driven out of the workforce (Libin,2021). Even after the end of this worldwide health crisis, about 2 million women are facing difficulties to return to the industry (Libin, 2021). However, according to ILO (2022), a study conducted in 75 countries during COVID-19 shows that about two-thirds of respondents reported an increase in inclusion and diversity in their workplaces.

Managing Diversity in Bangladesh During the COVID-19 Pandemic

During the pandemic, Bangladeshi female employees were more subjected to household chores and responsibilities due to societal pressure. A study on the work-life balance of female university professors during the pandemic shows that female employees had to spend more time on household chores and childcare than their male counterparts (Basak, 2022). According to IFC (n.d.), on average women spent 5.16 hours per day on childcare and domestic chores whereas men spent only 0.34 hours per day on the same activities. As a result, socio-cultural norms and beliefs about gender-specific roles created a challenge for working women to spend more time on their work (Uddin, 2021). Moreover, the gender gap in employment has increased in recent years. In 2017, the rate of male labor force participation in Bangladesh was 80% whereas the female participation rate was 36% (World Bank, 2019). During the pandemic, this rate has decreased significantly even in female-dominated sectors such as ready-made garments (IFC, 2022).

3.1.3 Objectives

Based on the literature review, there is only a few studies on the workplace diversity management in the context of Bangladeshi office culture. Therefore, this paper follows these objectives:

1. Identifying the challenges of accommodating different genders at workplace.
2. Pointing out the difficulties of managing diversity based on employee age and background.
3. Determining how the organizations overcame the challenges.

3.1.4 Significance

This research will play a significant role in the study of post pandemic diversity management in the workforce of Bangladesh. In this research, I have studied the workplace challenges faced in diversity management during the COVID-19 pandemic. In doing so, I have conducted interviews with management departments of multiple renowned companies of the country. As such, this research bears the significance of portraying the vital issues and solutions faced by the diverse workforce of the local and multinational companies positioned throughout the country. Hence it will be useful for managers to retain and maintain healthy work environment to get maximum productivity. Moreover, this paper will be useful to academicians and researchers to carry out further studies on different perspectives to achieve sustainable solutions for the challenges in diversity management in Bangladesh.

3.2 Methodology

There are generally three types of research such as qualitative, quantitative and mixed based on the form of data collection. Qualitative research refers to an iterative process of inquiry to seek an in-depth understanding of social phenomena (Aspers & Corte, 2019). It is a form of research that collects data through open-ended and conversational engagement. This form of research is generally found on social science fields such as anthropology, psychology, and

sociology. Qualitative research method is constructed in a way to disclose the respondents perceptions and behaviors in a related topic. As a result, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, content analysis, case study methods are well accepted qualitative research approaches (“Qualitative Research: Definition, Types, Methods and Examples”, 2022).

Quantitative Research is a systematic analysis of particular events via collecting measurable data. This form of research utilizes statistical, mathematical, or technological methods to analyze data gathered through different sampling methods by using online surveys, polls, questionnaires and other forms of data collection method (“Qualitative Research: Definition, Types, Methods and Examples”, 2022).

Mixed research method is deployed to design a study method that combines both philosophical assumptions and inquiry methodologies. This form of research blends the methods of both qualitative and quantitative research to offer a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem than either method alone (Creswell and Clark, 2007).

However, for this study, a qualitative research approach is chosen as the purpose of this study is to analyze the challenges in diversity management. It will also explore the impact of COVID-19 on managing the challenges in midst of the changing environment.

3.2.1 Interview

There are many types of data collection methods. However, this study chose the semi-structured interview method due to the time and fund constraints. A semi-structured interview is conducted via some predetermined questions. However, rest of the questions are mostly conversational and not pre-structured ahead of time to allow spontaneous exploration of the subject matter (Harrell and Bradley, 2009). This experimental study chose to adopt this method to identify the challenges and solutions of diversity management within organizations.

3.2.2 Sampling Method

Convenience sampling method is employed in this study considering the needed flexibility of the participants' due to their busy schedule. Convenience sampling method is a form of non-probability sampling approach that collects data from individuals that are readily available ("Convenience Sampling – Research Methodology", 2022). Prior to selection of participants, no inclusive criteria were applied in this form of sampling. A total of 9 management professionals from different industries such as FMCG, RMG, tobacco, e-commerce, medical, and airline were interviewed within the course of two weeks for the purpose of this study.

3.2.3 Thematic Analysis

The data was analyzed manually due to the small sample size. The thematic analysis is used aiming to make the meaning of the participants' responses. After conducting the interviews, the collected information is transcribed manually. With a view to proper understanding of the responses, codes are identified to construct categories, which served as the foundation of the findings and analysis part. Finally, in the next part, the primary data is presented by dividing them in two major components such as the challenges in diversity management and the adopted solutions of the management team.

3.3 Findings and Analysis

This section provides the presentation and analysis of data collected through interviews and primary research. It shows not only the challenges in diversity management but also provides insight into how organizations took steps to overcome them.

3.3.1 Personal Bias in The Context of Gender and Age

According to the interviews, personal bias is one of the major challenges in diversity management. Though diversity is quite a new aspect of workplaces in the context of

Bangladesh, most organizations are trying their level best to incorporate diversity among employees. However, personal bias against women is still prevalent. In this context, Participant 4 opined that

“As a part of the MNC culture, we try to be as inclusive as possible. However, there are some employees who have difficulty accepting female supervisors. Though they do not want to show their bias openly, it becomes quite evident with their uncooperative behavior.”

Participant 1 had similar opinion that aligns with Participant 4. They shared their personal experience that uncooperative behavior based on gender creates difficulties for female employees to survive in the office environment. The participant expressed:

“Sometimes, I felt secluded from my own team due to the lack of cooperation. And it feels quite unmotivating to work in such unwelcomed environment.”

However, personal bias is not always subjected against women. Generational differences can also lead to bias. For example, in performance-based promotional settings, it is common for younger generations to come forth with their new ideas and even get promoted before their older colleagues. When sharing ideas, young employees may feel invalidated by their superiors. In this context Participant 8 shared,

“If there is a significant age difference between supervisors and subordinates, the supervisors sometimes get defensive about his/her own expertise and knowledge. As a result, the subordinates fail to gain their approval. It also happens when someone young gets promoted early. It is all about their personal acceptance.”

The participant further went on to say:

“I think, age gap creates a problem when individuals are not open to accept different ideas and values from their own.”

According to the interviews, these challenges remained in the office culture even before COVID-19 started. The pandemic had very little impact on the personal bias issue as it already

existed. However, Participant 5 contrasted that employees were eager to work through the pandemic with a cooperative mindset.

3.3.2 Communication Gap

The office environment plays an important role in how employees communicate. Though during the pandemic most of the companies switched to remote working, there were plenty of organizations that needed to operate in a conventional way. In this case, in the male-dominated office culture communication gap between male and female employees is a great challenge. According to Participant 7,

“The office environment is more male dominated here. As a result, a few female employees feel uncomfortable communicating. Most of the time, the issue remains as uncommunicated opinions rather than miscommunication.”

Similar opinions were stated by Participant 9 from the perspective of power gap between the employees in the medical industry,

“Sometimes miscommunication happens between senior and junior doctors and nurses. Mostly because of the gap of expertise between them. Junior officers are more hesitant while reporting directly to consultants.”

Both opinions shared common grounds for communication. However, in one case it is due to an unbalanced male-to-female employee ratio and in another case, the problem lies in the power gap between the employees. The latter is also supported according to Abdullah et al. (2011) that the high-power distance between employees leads to misunderstandings and miscommunications.

3.3.3 Social Aspects

Due to the nature of the remote working culture during the pandemic, female employees could use the opportunity to balance work and family. However, those who needed to work outside their homes felt societal pressure to be with their families. In some cases, female employees withdraw from working outside and prefer working from home. According to Participant 2,

“During the pandemic, it was quite difficult for me to commute outside as I had to spend more time on taking care of my children and family.”

The participant also added,

“I spent more time in managing household work as I could not find anyone to help me around due to health concerns. I had to manage remote working and household chores simultaneously.”

Participant 1 had similar opinion that aligns with participant 2. The participant expressed:

“I opted for remote working during the pandemic. I had to spend more time in household work as I was hesitant to get help from outside due to health concerns.”

3.3.4 Measures to Overcome Challenges

All participants agreed on the importance of overcoming the challenges in diversity management. Since the societal barriers to movement for females were more common, companies tried to solve the problem by providing safe transportation and limited working hours. In this context Participant 4 stated that

“As movement during the pandemic was one of the biggest challenges, especially for women, we provided transportation with safety measures. The company also provided laptops, and modems to ensure everyone's online visibility. We also had counseling on cyberbullying and harassment to ensure safety and presence.”

Though not all companies took the same measures to prevent these challenges, other participants somewhat agreed to get similar treatments from their companies. Participant 3 added that

“For those who needed to inspect factories, we assigned our employees to inspect factories near their residences. I think it went well because none of our employees felt left out on their assigned job.”

However, very few companies addressed any real measures to solve the problem of personal bias and reduce the communication gap between genders and generations.

3.4 Discussions and Implications

Based on the collected information, most of the participants reported that personal bias in workplace is one of the greatest challenges in diversity management. For this challenge most of the female employees face uncooperative behaviour from their male coworkers. Moreover, this phenomenon is more common for female supervisors. Participant 4 expressed that female supervisor often face uncooperative actions from their male colleagues because of their mentality of not being able to accept female supervision. This issue has been brought to light by researchers. According to a study, about 40% of female employees face double standards and uncooperative behaviour while working and entering the executive roles (McCormic, 2015). Personal bias also plays a significant role in hiring female employees in managerial positions. Participant 7 shared that their office environment is more male dominated which shows the unbalanced male to female ratio in employees. In this context, according to Coulter and Robbins (2014), only 2% female employees are hired in managerial positions due to personal bias.

Generational difference between employees is also one of the major challenges in diversity management. As different generations have different values, most people tend to approve of

their similar kind. As a result, younger employees feel invalidated while older generations have difficulty accepting the new opinions and ideas. Additionally, generational differences also play a significant role in communication gap due to lack of acceptance of different generations. One of the studies supports this concept by showing the contrasting preferences among baby boomers, generation x and millennials. As generation x and millennials prefer work life balance, baby boomers are more interested in supporting working overtime (Sherman, 2006). Furthermore, according to the participants, communication gap among employees hinders the sound practice of diversity at workplace. In this context, the unbalanced ratio of male to female employee plays a significant role in communication. According to participant 7, the unbalanced ratio creates an uncomfortable environment for both genders. As a result, their opinions remain uncommunicated. Moreover, another reason of communication gap is the high-power gap between employees. According to participant 9, junior employees feel hesitant while reporting to their supervisors due to their level of expertise in the field. This concept can be supported by a study that displays that subordinate tend to accept the idea of not disclosing all information which can be a potential problem of miscommunication (Abdullah et al., 2011).

In addition to these issues, Bangladesh's socio-cultural aspect hinders diversity at workplace. The participants expressed that female employee are responsible for household work and childcare. During the COVID-19, this situation aggravated due to rising health concerns. According to the participants, female employees felt more pressure in balancing their careers and work. Societal pressure to participate in household chores without support made them feel to change their nature of their job. This societal aspect is covered in different studies. One of the studies indicates that Bangladeshi female employees spent more time in household chores and childcare due to societal pressure during the pandemic (Basak, 2022). Moreover, a study shows the contrasting results between male (0.34 hours) and female (5.16 hours) employees' hours spent in household chores and childcare per day (IFC, n.d.).

Finally, according to the collected information from the participants, the management took some measures to improve female employee engagement at workplace. Due to the pandemic, most organization opted for remote working. According to Participant 4, the management wanted to ensure every employee's online presence. As a result, the employees were provided with necessary tools as well as counselling for online safety. Moreover, other employees somewhat agreed to receiving transportation regardless of genders and ages. However, the participants shared that there were only attempts are made to resolve the issues of personal bias and communication gap at the workplace.

The organizations operating in Bangladesh, both local and MNCs should take active initiatives to manage diversity and inclusivity in a serious manner. Since diversity is a new concept in the context of Bangladeshi office culture, it may take more time to be widely accepted and adopted. However, it is up to both private and government sectors to practice effective diversity in different industries. In this scenario following measures can be taken Introduction of diversity skill training can help employees to be aware of a diverse workforce and identify bias and prejudice. Moreover, training on effective communications with diverse groups can help minorities gain confidence as well as the majority's understanding of other groups. Additionally, training and counseling should be given to minorities to be able to advance in their career. Finally, breaking the glass ceiling to provide skilled women and minorities to be in management positions so that it can become a practice in effective diversity management.

3.5 Summary and Conclusions

This study aimed at identifying the challenges in managing a diversified workforce in Bangladesh during the pandemic so that future authorities can take action to minimize the effects of these challenges. The study pointed out some major challenges such as working against personal bias which affects not only the female employees but also senior employees and new recruits. Moreover, it also shows the power struggle between males and females that a number of male employees find it difficult to accept management under female supervisors. Further, it also indicates that the unbalanced male-to-female ratio disrupts the office environment which creates a lack of communication and transparency between employees. Additionally, high generational and power distance creates miscommunications as well. Though these challenges existed even before the pandemic, in some cases these situations worsened. However, the pandemic also helped some organizations to reduce these challenges. One of the biggest challenges was for women to transport during the pandemic which was caused by societal pressure to stay at home during the pandemic. The participants also added the measures that they have taken to minimize the effect of these challenges which included providing safe transportation during the pandemic, adapting to remote working, ensuring safety against cyberbullying and harassment as well as ensuring ease of field visits by the inclusion of all employees.

3.6 Limitations and Future Directions

This study has some limitations like most other studies. Firstly, the sample size of the interviews and the nature of data collection are the major limitations. The study only included the perspectives of 9 management professionals. During the interviews, the participants' views may be influenced by their personal attributes as well as their company policy. As a result, they might have been hesitant to disclose critical information. Since it included only a small sample size, the study cannot be generalized. In the future, an in-depth study on different industries and professionals with ethnic backgrounds can help to identify more challenges in diversity management in Bangladesh. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic is almost over, more in depth researches on these similar topics should be conducted as there are possibilities of growing health issues in future. Management of diversity related research will be useful in the post pandemic situation to identify the problems and find plausible solutions to them.

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Appendix

Interview Protocol

Position:	Date of interview:
<p>Opening Statement: Thank you so much for meeting me. I am Nowshin Anjum, a final year undergraduate student from BRAC University. I am currently working on my internship report under the supervision of Assistant professor, Dr. Md Asadul Islam and Co-supervision of Ms. Nusrat Hafiz. The title of my report is “Exploration of Challenges in Managing Diversified Workforce in Bangladesh During the COVID-19 Pandemic”. This interview is a part of this report. My aim is to understand your views on the challenges of managing a diversified workforce and how your organization managed diversity during the pandemic. For the purpose of collecting and recording information, I am asking your permission to record this interview. This paper is purely academic in nature, and aimed for publication. Also, to clarify, your personal information will be kept private and anonymous. If you are still not comfortable, you can choose to withdraw from the interview at any point in time.</p>	
<p>Warm-up Question:</p> <p>1. Tell me a bit about your organization’s views on diversity and inclusion.</p>	
Interview Questions	

1. What type of problems do you generally face while working with a diverse group of people?
2. Since the pandemic affected overall operations, how did it impact the management of employees of different backgrounds?
3. What were the major challenges did you face while managing a diverse team during the pandemic?
4. How did you tackle the challenges while managing your team?
5. Did the company take any steps to overcome the challenges regarding employee diversity?
6. Are there any other challenges that you have faced regarding this issue?

