WORKFORCE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION: LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES IN VUCA PARADIGM

Bhumika Rathore, Mohanlal Sukhadia University, India (bhumi04.bhumi@gmail.com)
Meera Mathur, Mohanlal Sukhadia University, India (meeramathurfms@yahoo.co.in)
Shweta Solanki, Mohanlal Sukhadia University, India (shwetasolanki884@gmail.com)
Seema Sharma, Mohanlal Sukhadia University, India (seemaashish24@gmail.com)

ABSTRACT

The abbreviation of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity is known as VUCA that was first described by Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus in 1987 based on their Leadership theories. VUCA settings has been emerged due to continuous changing business model, innovative technology, updated management style and the ongoing Covid-19 outbreak, where status quo is not an option in leadership. Diversity and inclusion (D&I) is one of those agendas for a leader to be managed in effective manner. A leader, who not just focuses on diversity but makes inclusion as a part of organizational culture, is successfully facing VUCA settings. This exploratory research is conducted to study concept of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA) world, concept of diversity and inclusion in VUCA settings and in between role of an inclusive leader. So, in this study the researchers conducted a systematic review of literature for formulation of a hypothetical research model for future scope. The researchers included studies regarding workforce diversity, D&I in VUCA world, features of VUCA world and required leadership competencies as well leadership challenges.

Keywords: Workforce Diversity, Inclusion, VUCA, Leadership, Competencies, Challenges.

1. INTRODUCTION

There is a deep wisdom in the words of Malcolm Forbes "Diversity is thinking independently together". Many a time's diversity and inclusion are assumed to be a same thing but that is not correct. If diversity is a kind of pooling where different people from different age group, gender, sexual orientation, persons from various geographical background and culture are invited, then inclusion is allowing everyone to walk in their own style. The role of leadership is very important in this aspect as it can be a contextual variable and an inclusive leader can play a key role for the relationship between diversity management and effective employee engagement.

As described by (Sherbin & Rashid, 2017) role of an inclusive leader: this sort of leadership is a combination of six practices: guaranteeing that group individuals shout out and are heard; making it safe to propose clever thoughts; enabling colleagues to decide; taking exhortation and actualizing criticism; giving significant input; and sharing credit for group achievement.

The CEO's of leading companies like Hindustan Unilever, Procter and Gamble, PepsiCo, IBM, Accenture, Deloitte, Wipro are particularly focusing diversity and inclusion (D&I) in their vision and with special reference to VUCA settings.

Objectives of the study: So, following objectives have been identified to fulfill the research study:
- o   To study the concept of VUCA framework.
- o   To study existing literature of workforce diversity & inclusion practices.
- o   To identify leadership competencies and challenges for creating an inclusive business environment from the various academic sources.
- o   To develop a hypothetical research model by extracting the variables from existing literature for further research.

1.1   Overview of VUCA Framework and Diversity & Inclusion

The world has changed not just due to financial crisis or innovative technology, developed business analytics and artificial intelligence or continuous changing corporate models or the novel corona outbreak which is a new normal for providing a work from home culture and social distancing and what not?

Sometimes these changes are gradual but rarely it's sudden as this millennial generation is experiencing never seen before corona crisis. So, a VUCA paradigm depicts an unstable situation which has many variables and every change is possible.

Figure 1: VUCA framework
Source: (Benette & Lemoine, 2014) Harvard Business Review

If we talk about workforce diversity, the most important dimensions to be considered are gender and age diversity. Similar study done by (Rajesh, Ekambaram, Rakesh, & Kumar, 2019)and they stated that gender diversity is the most crucial dimension of workforce diversity to be managed in VUCA environment.

 In the past decade organizations have already pulled their socks for more inclusion of women and LGBT community and efforts like talent management—attracting, hiring, retaining and developing talent, catering to the differences in aspirations and working styles of men and women have been seen.
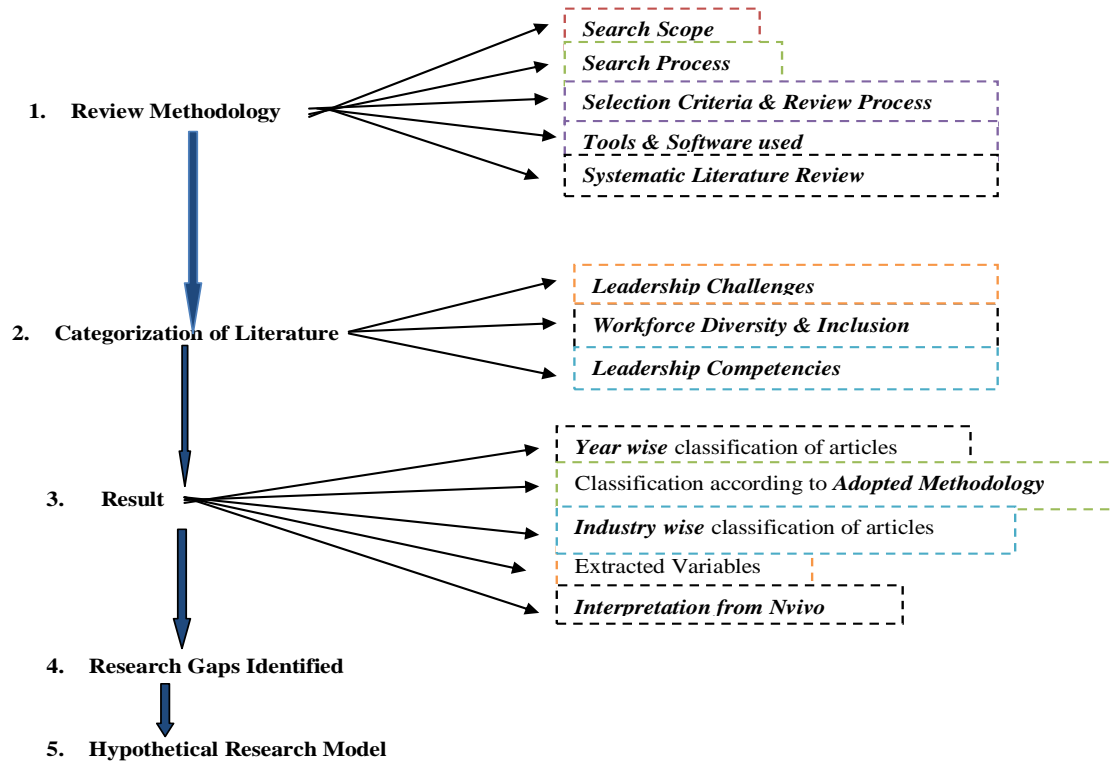
2.   EXPERIENTIAL WORK

This is a review study and trying to depict a picture about leadership challenges for workforce diversity and inclusion in VUCA paradigm. The flow of experiential work is as following:

First section explains review methodology which is further classified into literature search process, search scope, selection criteria and then a systematic review of literature.

Second section of the study explains categorization of studies and a broad classification has been done.

Third section explains various results from SLR. The researcher has classified the results into year wise, methodology wise and variables wise classification. As the researcher has used qualitative data analysis software Nvivo so there are some interpretations from it. After reviewing existing literature the researcher was able to find out research gap that

has been explained further. Finally the researcher was able to make a hypothetical research model on the basis of existing literature that has been explained in last.

Figure 2: Experiential Work
Source: Developed for Research

2.1 Methodology

In this study the researcher delved into various empirical and conceptual studies regarding VUCA, D&I and leadership role as a contextual variable. A systematic review of literature was conducted to answer the research question and to develop a hypothetical research model for future research.

The initial search across the database was limited to key words, reference work and abstracts to gain a familiarity with the concept of VUCA, leadership and D&I across the globe. Relevant key words were used to select articles e.g. workforce diversity, Workforce Diversity, Inclusion, VUCA, Leadership, Competencies, Challenges etc.
The search was commenced from September, 2020 to December 2020. Scholarly journals are selected for review of research papers with no restrictions on publications' outlet. However, the selection of the papers was based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. The potential contribution of this study is to map the field of diversity and inclusion and leadership challenges in VUCA paradigm and its practices. This study synthesizes the state of knowledge and creates an agenda for further research by using Cooper's Taxonomy.
The following research question was addressed in review of literature:
RQ: What is the role of an inclusive leader in VUCA paradigm?
Review Methodology

The researchers conducted a systematic review of literature as systematic reviews vary from conventional narrative literature review in a few different ways. Often, narrative literature, don't include an efficient inquiry of the writing, and in this manner regularly center around a subset of studies in a territory picked dependent on accessibility or researcher's choice**.** Systematic review of literature, as the name suggests, commonly include a definite and extensive

arrangement and search technique determined from the earlier, with the objective of decreasing predisposition by recognizing, evaluating, and blending all important examinations on a specific point.

Search Scope

The researcher studied VUCA framework, antecedents and consequences of diversity and inclusion at workplace, leadership competencies as well as leadership challenges in diversity management in VUCA paradigm across the globe.
This study reviews relevant literature area in workforce diversity management, its impact, practices and challenges. This review is an attempt to present the literature in the systematic pattern unlike the past studies. This shall guide future researchers with a systematic understanding of the concepts and techniques used in this area of study.

Search Process

Published articles, theses and research papers are selected from various research databases such as Research gate, Elsevier and Scopus, EBSCO, Proquest, SSRN, Shodhganga, Academia, Google Scholar etc in which publications like Wiley, SAGE, Springer, Emerald were included. Wide range of papers is selected for the study from these databases. Some specific journals like Journal of Diversity Management, Indian Journal of Management etc were used for selection of articles. Relevant key words were used to select articles e.g. Workforce Diversity, Inclusion, VUCA, Leadership, Competencies, Challenges etc.

S.no.	Research Database	Scope	Time of Search	No. of Selected Articles
	Table 1: Literature Search Details			
1.	Scopus	Key Words, Abstract	September 2020-October 2020	7
2.	EBSCO	Key Words, Abstract	September 2020-October 2020	9
3.	Research Gate	Key Words, Abstract, Full text	September 2020-October 2020	6
4.	SSRN	Key Words, Abstract, Full text	September 2020-October 2020	7
5.	Elsevier	Key Words, Abstract, Full text	September 2020-October 2020	6
6.	Harvard Business Review	Key Words, Abstract, Full text	September 2020-October 2020	10
7.	Total			55

Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria for Selection and Review Process

The inclusion and exclusion criteria for selection of articles were decided. Journal articles and books which have been published between the years 2009 to 2020 were selected. The major focus was on studies related to workforce diversity, inclusion, VUCA, leadership challenges and competencies. However, duplicates, miscellaneous, conference proceeding, opinions were discarded. Also, studies not in English language and not in management context were excluded.

Table 2: Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria of Articles	
Inclusion	Exclusion
Focus on workforce diversity management, inclusion, leadership challenges, biases	Duplicates
Studies related to VUCA paradigm and leadership competencies	Not in Management context
Journal Articles, Books	Miscellaneous
Published articles between years 2009-2020	Not in English language
Full Text Available	Conference Proceedings, Opinions

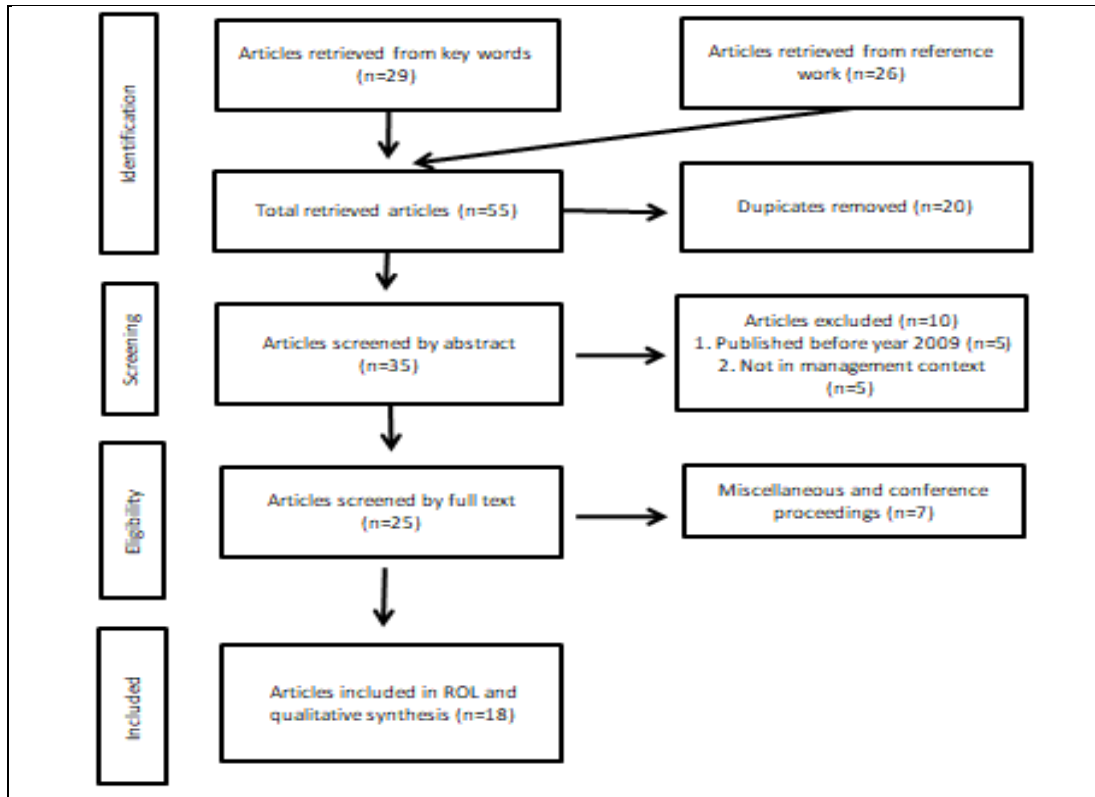### 2.2 Systematic Review of literature (Level , 1, 2, 3, 4)

Following steps have been included in SLR process:

Level 1 (Identification): Articles and studies have been searched using relevant key words and reference work. At this stage 29 articles were selected by using key words and 26 articles were retrieved from reference work. Hence, at level 1 total number of retrieved articles was 55. After identifying articles 20 duplicate and miscellaneous articles were omitted.

Level 2 (Screening): At this stage 35 articles were screened by abstract and 10 articles were eliminated on the basis on exclusion and inclusion criteria. Articles excluded which were published before year 2009, other than English language and not in Management context.

Level 3 (Eligibility): At this stage 25 articles were screened by full text and based on eligibility criteria (conference proceedings and opinions were excluded) 7 articles were omitted.

Level 4 (Included): After going through above stages 18 articles were found suitable for this particular study. At this stage all qualified articles were read thoroughly for synthesis and review of literature.

Figure 3: PRISMA Framework Developed for Systematic Review of Literature

Compilation and Referencing Tools

All the research articles and studies were compiled in a systematic manner. For proper referencing of articles **Zotero software** has been used. However, each article was placed in **MS Excel** and information like Author, publication year,

Journal name, location, antecedents, consequences, moderators and mediators were manually entered and analyzed. For the synthesis purpose and to find out research gap **Nvivo software** has been used.

2.3 Categorization of Literature

Extensive researches has been done on workforce diversity by researchers both at global & national level and on the basis of it, this review has been divided into three sections**:**

Studies Addressing Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Practices

There are several studies have been done on workforce diversity management at national and global level. But fewer are the studies which address the concept of diversity with inclusion. After several screening process the researcher has included five studies in this section.

Now a day diversity management focus has been shifted towards more inclusion of employees. Now many researchers has coined a new term that is "Diversity Intelligence".(Das, 2019) Diversity management training can develop limitations like stereotypes and diversity as an obstacle. So, the researcher replaced the term diversity management training to diversity intelligence.

Diversity intelligence is the information that causes leaders to get individuals and worth their disparities as a special commitment to authoritative achievement. Diversity intelligence underpins pioneers to rehearse coordinated dynamic where each part feels a feeling of belongingness and regarded for their important job.

Through diversity intelligence, pioneers can set up a trustable relationship with their followers. Hence, diversity intelligence upholds pioneers to show comprehensive administration conduct. Alongside scholarly knowledge, enthusiastic insight, and social insight, assorted variety insight ought to coordinate into initiative and profession improvement plan.
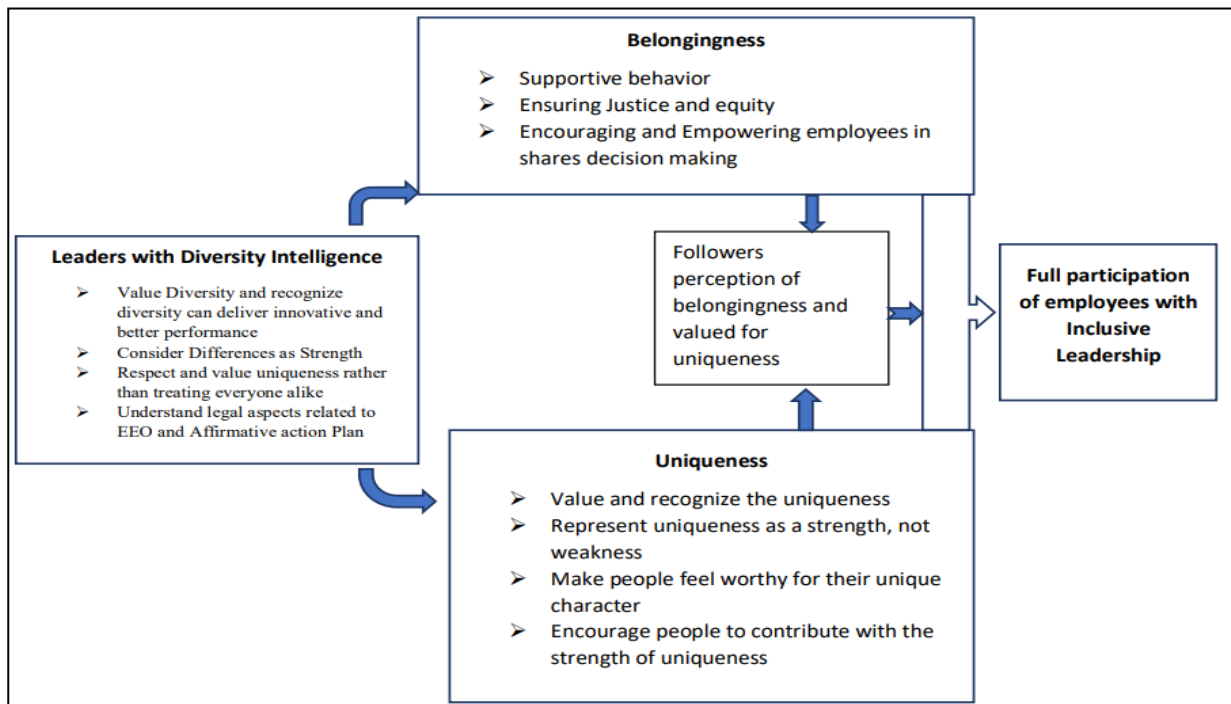
Figure 4: Diversity Intelligence and Inclusive Leadership
Source: (Das, 2019)

There are studies related to diversity management and inclusion which show a significant relationship with employee engagement. The investigation of (Goswami & Goswami, 2018) has utilized a review to gather information from representatives working in the private telecom organizations in India, utilizing an organized survey (n=383) of National Capital Region (NCR), India. In their study stated that workplace diversity and inclusion has a significant positive relationship with worker or employee engagement. The three factors which they involved in their study were workforce diversity, administrative backings and trust in pioneer. The investigation not just discovered relationship between inclusion and employee engagement, yet additionally settled a connection between trust in pioneer and employee engagement. (Lapoint & Spence, 2017) examined the distinctions in employee engagement over the three ages right now in the work power: Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennial. The elements which were viewed as reliant on the age diversity: Frequently investing all energy into work, Feeling so enveloped with work that hours pass by like minutes, Having associates that rapidly adjust to testing or emergency circumstances, Having individuals that are consistently adaptable in extending the extent of their age in a work gathering and Being fulfilled in the assortment of the work.

Studies regarding diversity management and job performance, perception for working conditions, organizational effectiveness have been done by scholars. In the study of (Kundu, Mehra, & Mor, 2017) relationship between diversity management and employees' intention to quit was established with mediating role of employee motivation. They included 547 respondents from 234 organizations of India. Their study concluded a significant negative relationship between diversity management and employees' intention to quit but the employee motivation partially mediates this relationship.(Choi, 2016)investigated the information from the government workforce, this study inspected how the racial blend of the federal workforce influences job satisfaction of racial/ethnic minority and white representatives.

Studies Addressing Leadership Challenges in Diversity Management and Inclusion

Challenges like miscommunication, discrimination, rate of employee turnover are quite apparent for leaders in workforce diversity management in VUCA scenario. In the opinion of(Shaban, 2016)a diverse workforce has so many challenges to manage by the leaders. For example if diversity is not very well managed it can lead to miscommunication, conflict, less social cohesion, high employee turnover, adverse stereotypes, bias, perception of inequity and many unintentional effects. The researcher also suggested that instead of a general leadership theory, managers can adapt a leader-member exchange theory (LMX). (Dixit & Bajpai, 2015) opined that in India the biggest challenge for leaders is to make diverse minority workforce (such as LGBT and PWD) included. (bedi, lakra, & Gupta, 2014)opined that the biggest challenge in accepting diversity are: Prejudice, Ethnocentrism, stereotypes, discrimination, harassment and backlash. In the view of (Buddhapriya, 2013) the greatest challenge for leaders is to develop a healthy attitude towards minority and updating HR strategies for a progressive inclusion.(Patrick & Rajkumar, 2012)suggested in their study that discrimination, ethnocentrism and prejudice are the critical barriers for leaders to manage a diverse workforce and inclusivity.
In the opinion of(Clapp, 2010)Rush University Medical Center had commendable progress in diversity and inclusion practices since year 2006 still diversity related obstacles were remained the same. To cope up the challenges Rush invited a committee to formulate DLG (Diversity Leadership Group) Model.

Studies Addressing Leadership Competencies in an Inclusive Organizational Culture in VUCA Paradigm

There is no doubt that inclusion is two way bridges where an agile leader connect diversity with inclusion but the organization cannot help it out with the help of employees itself. There is no meaning of all these efforts if employees themselves keep them excluded from organizational culture.(Millar, Groth, & Mahon, 2018)suggested in their study challenges as well as recommendations to manage successfully this unpredictable environment. According to them leaders should adapt new skills, abilities and tools in VUCA paradigm. Focus on change management can be a game changer. In VUCA paradigm a successful leadership is that which can provide a network entrepreneurship and implementing integrated business models. So, there are studies which address different leadership styles for diversity management in VUCA world. According to (Chawla & Lenka, 2018) Transformational and Resonant leadership style is the best for higher education institutes. The researchers conducted a study on 150 faculty members of Indian higher educational institutes. It was concluded that resonant leadership style has more impact than transformational leadership style in VUCA landscape. In the view of (Andriukaitienė, Voronkova, Kyvliuk, Marina, & Sakun, 2017) There have been various examinations on the subject of authority capabilities, and directors' initiative as a subject of logical exploration has gotten noteworthy consideration from researchers.

Lately, there is a developing acknowledgment that the conditions will turn out to be more mind boggling later on, organizations what's more, associations will progressively require pioneers with the suitable skills. The customary duty of the pioneer to balance out the organization's circumstance and to keep up a lasting parity is being changed by the need for the pioneers to start change themselves, advance development.

Individual instinct or business presentiment is not adequate for effective improvement of exercises, and practically speaking such administration isn't just the effective running of the administration capacities, yet in addition the capacity to discover estimates that will permit the workers to uncover their latent capacity advancing obligation. In these dynamic occasions new pioneers are required who are persuaded by higher motivating forces, guided by the vision and qualities, can help others improve, uncover their best characteristics and help locate the significance of their working life.

Affirmative action and equal employment opportunities are often considered with the concept of diversity but an inclusive leader is a hallmark of justice and fairness.

Some studies related to competency model for leadership in VUCA paradigm give a guideline to follow to manage workforce diversity.(Codrenu, 2016)proposed an outline of the potential arrangements that leaders can work so as to counter the impacts of the marvels got from such reality through vision, getting, clearness and agility(VUCA). Consequently, the potential flaw of the plans to be communicated: the overall perspectives should be adjusted and coordinated to specific conditions, which ideally becomes conceivable.

According to the researcher there are three principles can be identified as leadership competencies:
- ➢ Competency 1- Trusting the instincts on a vision based pattern behavior.
- ➢ Competency 2- Accountability for own actions.
- ➢ Competency 3- Talk the talk and walk the walk.

(Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2013)investigated the relationship between diversity management and employees' commitment with mediating role of leadership. Study information from a delegate test of 10,976 Dutch public sectors workers were utilized in testing the hypotheses. They concluded from the study that relationship between DM and employees' effective commitment can partially be affected by inclusive organizational culture and transformational leadership is considered as implementers of DM and agents of inclusion.(Visagie, Linde, & Havenga, 2011)studied relationship between DM and leadership style theory. They collected data from leaders and employees with 2669 respondents. Employees were neutral to positive that leaders are actually committed for gender and racial diversity but negative for the especially abled employees. Engaging leadership theory was also studied and it was concluded that leaders' style may be predictors of DM.(Mujtaba & Sungkhawan, 2009) established relationship between DM and situational leadership. A competent leader can use situational leadership style and can coach employees with effective communication so that focus should always be on productivity rather than biases.

3. CONCLUSION

VUCA- ness clearly shows that global situations are changing everyday and it is the new normal. An inclusive leader must adapt changes at individual level. Because inclusion is a thing, that must start from top to bottom. Many organizations are now appointing CIO (Chief Inclusion Officer) like CEO. The leader must create an inclusive business environment, objectives of D&I agenda must be clearly stated. As more, genuine implemented inclusive practices can solve the conundrum of survival in VUCA paradigm. For talent attraction also, D&I branding is irrefutable. Leadership challenges in VUCA settings are completely inevitable but acquisition is still an option. Successful leaders have the competencies of powerful communication, easy accessibility, and business efficacy with empathy and ensured productivity with ownership.

3.1 Year Wise Distribution of Articles

As shown in the following graph the maximum relevant studies related to the research theme was done in between year 2013 to 2020.
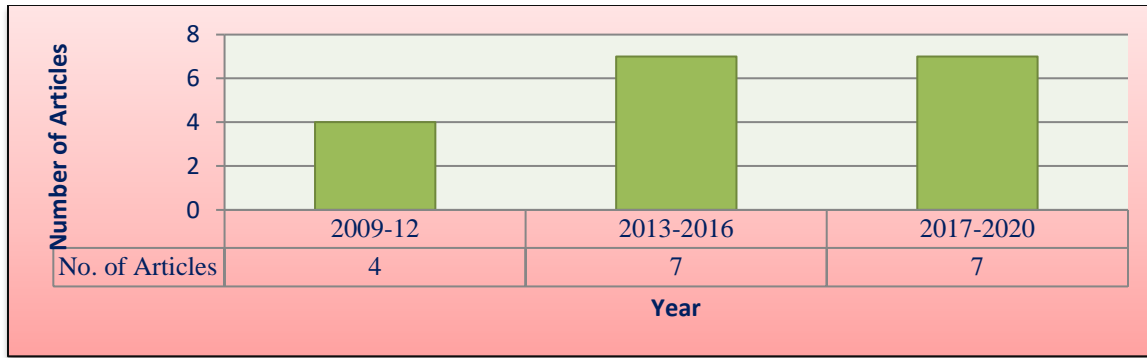
Figure 5: Year wise Distribution of Articles

3.2 Variables Extracted from Literature Review

It is quite evident from existing literature is that workforce diversity (generally age and race), inclusion, role of leader, employee engagement, motivation, intention to quit and job satisfaction are the most commonly discussed variables. Different leadership styles in context to VUCA paradigm were also discussed, e.g. transformational leadership style, resonant leadership style, situational leadership style and engaging leadership style.

**Table 3:** Variables Extracted from Literature Review
S.No.	Authors	Variables in the Study
1.	(Das, 2019)	Diversity Management, Diversity Intelligence, Role of Leader
2.	(Goswami & Goswami, 2018)	Workforce Diversity and Inclusion, Employee Engagement
3.	(Kundu, Mehra, & Mor, 2017)	Diversity Management, Employee Motivation, Intention to quit
4.	(Lapoint & Spence, 2017)	Generational Diversity, Employee Engagement
5.	(Choi, 2016)	Racial Diversity, Job Satisfaction

**Table 4:** Variables extracted from review of literature
S.No.	Authors	Variables in the Study
1.	(Chawla & Lenka, 2018)	VUCA Landscape, Transformational leadership style, Resonant Leadership Style
2.	(Andriukaitienė, Voronkova, Kyvliuk, Marina, & Sakun, 2017)	Inclusivity, Leadership, Diversity Management
3.	(Codrenu, 2016)	VUCA, Leadership competencies
4.	(Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2013)	Diversity Management, Employee's commitment, Transformational leadership style
5.	(Visagie, Linde, & Havenga, 2011)	Racial, Gender and Ability diversity, Engaging leadership style
6.	(Mujtaba & Sungkhawan, 2009)	Diversity Management, Situational leadership

3.3 Classification According to Adopted Methodology

The researcher focused on every type of study and categorized it into three sections: qualitative, quantitative and mixed studies. It was found that qualitative studies (55.55%) include conceptual and reviews based studies and had an insightful theories and frameworks. There was not much difference between qualitative and quantitative studies (38.88%) e.g. questionnaire survey, internet survey and case study. There were studies which adopted a mixed methodology (5.55%) like survey and focus group interview.

**Table 5:** Classification According to Adopted Methodology

Qualitative Studies	No. of Articles	Quantitative Studies	No. of Articles	Mixed	No. of Articles
Conceptual Studies	8	Questionnaire Survey	5	Survey and Focus Group Interviews	1
Literature Reviews	2	Internet/ E-mail Survey	1	Unspecified	0
		Case Study	1		
	10		7		1
Total	18				
%	55.55%		38.88%		5.55%
Total %	100.00%				

3.4 Industry Wise Classification of Articles

The purpose of writing this section was to identify the industries that have encountered the most workforce diversity management and VUCA related research problems. Three industries have been identified out of which most common industries were public and academic sectors. Here total 7 articles have been identified as remaining 11 studies were conceptual and no specific industry was mentioned.

Table 6: Industry wise Classification of Articles		
Industry	Total Articles	%
Telecom Industry	1	14.28%
Public Sector	2	28.57%
Academic/ Higher Education Institutes	2	28.57%
Others	2	28.57%
Total	7	100%

3.5 Interpretation from Nvivo

Here, the researcher has coded 15 articles related to diversity management to get representations like word cloud, tree map, cluster analysis and text search query result preview.

The word cloud is helpful in identifying research gap. Word clouds or tag clouds are graphical representations of word frequency that give greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in a source text. The larger the word in the visual the more common the word was in the documents.
It is quite apparent from the above word cloud picture that there have been studies on workforce diversity, employee performance and gender diversity. We can also interpret from the diagram that role of inclusion, training, perceptions, leadership have also been explored in the previous studies.

Figure 6: Word Cloud of Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Literature

**3.6 Research Gaps Identified**

There are various researches which have been conducted on workforce diversity management and its challenges but an exploratory study which includes not just the concept of diversity but inclusion also with special reference to VUCA paradigm and its leadership competencies and challenges, is yet to be done. So, this study is trying to give a hypothetical research model in this untapped area of D&I for future research.

3.7 Hypothetical Research Model

Hypothetical research model on the basis of Review of Literature:
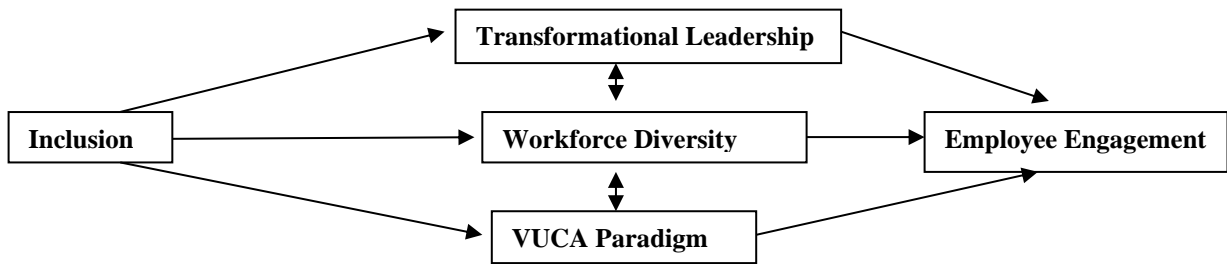
Figure 7: Hypothetical Research Model
Source: Developed by Researcher

After the review of literature a hypothetical research model is developed for future research. First, it is hypothesized that there is a significant relationship between workforce diversity and inclusion. As it is clear from the studies that merely diversity does not work magically for organizational effectiveness, diversity is the just first step towards inclusion of each and every human resources. So there must be a positive significant relationship exist there.
Second, the hypothesis for future studies could be that there is a positive significant relationship between leadership style and inclusion. As there are various leadership styles e.g. transformational, engaging, resonant, situational affect the inclusion practices and diversity management.
Third, there is significant relationship between VUCA landscape and inclusion practices within the organization.
Fourth, the diversity has significant positive impact on employee engagement.
All those hypotheses are developed based on systematic literature of review in the present research.

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