# DID DIVERSITY TRAINING ENHANCE WORKPLACE INCLUSION AND ORGANIZATIONAL OUTCOMES DURING COVID-19?

by

Lin Geng

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Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kma'ki, the

ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq.

We are all Treaty people.

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# ABSTRACT

Workplace diversity has always been a popular topic, especially in an immigrant country like Canada. Canada's diverse workforce is likely to increase due to the growing percentage of immigrants. Yet the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced new changes to the working environment, forcing many businesses to shift to a purely remote or hybrid working style, which makes it challenging to create organizational cultures. This study explores the challenges faced by people of color (POC) employees at work both before and during the pandemic and highlights the need for organizations to pursue better diversity training programs. The TAEC model, which has as its central idea that a diverse society must shift progressively through four attitudes: Tolerance, Acceptance, Embrace, and Celebration is used to investigate key factors that determine an individual's awareness and emotions when encountering change or when expecting to meet and work with people different from themselves. This study applied a mixed-methods design and used a survey for data collection. The original TAEC survey contained 61 items, and an additional six questions were included to ask participants about their attitudes and changes while collaborating with their coworkers during the pandemic. In addition, two open-ended questions were designed to further probe the responses related to participants' experiences during the pandemic. As a result, data from the participants indicates that POC employees did undergo several challenges and barriers at the workplace due to the pandemic and remote working. The data also suggests that where there was diversity training, it was not very effective, and in many cases, there was no diversity training. Moreover, responses from the participants also reveal that there were a lot of emotions involved at the workplace, and most of them were negative. Therefore, results show that there is an urgent need for effective diversity training, which I believe the TAEC diversity model will allow.

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| Abbreviations | Definitions |
|---|---|
| COVID-19 | Coronavirus Disease 2019 |
| POC | People of Color |
| TAEC | Tolerance-Acceptance-Embrace-Celebrate |
| 2SLGBTQIA+ | Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (or Questioning), Intersex, Asexual, and the plus sign represent other sexual orientations and gender identities. |
| PWD | People with Disabilities |

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

**What is diversity in the workplace?**

The term "workplace diversity" includes a range of distinctions among employees within an organization, including but not limited to disparities in gender, race, culture, physical condition, and sexual identity (O'Donovan, 2018). The challenges that each subgroup faced will be further discussed in the paper. Nonetheless, while there are various types of diversity at work, this paper focuses mainly on the cultural and racial diversity aspects in the context of Canada's business environment.

**Theoretical Foundation**

To carry out this study, two pertinent theories were considered to determine the factors that may lead to a workplace sensitive to diversity. The preference for these two theories as foundational frameworks over other theories stems from their unique contributions to comprehending the significance of workplace diversity. Ethical theory provides the universal principles of moral frameworks that every individual should follow, which are crucial for fostering a culture of inclusion in the workplace setting. In addition, social identity theory provides insights into the impact of group identities on behaviour and attitudes within the workplace, which is also important in studying cross-cultural dynamics.

1. Ethical Theory

According to Brady and Hart (2007), the ethical theory recommends what character traits individuals should possess and the kinds of actions they should perform. Moreover, there are various subsections in the ethical theory, including the utilitarian approach, which aims for actions that maximize good (Udoudom, 2021); the virtue approach, which focuses on personal character, suggesting decisions with virtues such as honesty and integrity (Steen et al., 2021); the egoistic approach, which prioritizes personal interests and decisions that could advance self-gains (Rothstein, 2022); the common good approach, which advocates respect and compassion for all, focusing decisions that take into consideration of all well-being; and the fairness or justice ethics,

emphasizing equal treatment according to justifiable norms, and fostering fairness in creating and establishing laws.

Among all the subsections of ethical theory, several aspects are well suited to promoting fairness and equitable treatment for all minority groups. For example, intuitionism in ethical theory posits that individuals possess innate abilities to recognize moral rightness directly without relying on elaborate inferential procedures (Strattin-Lake, 2014). This immediate moral cognition is crucial in cross-cultural study, as it provides an immediate sense of the ethical dimensions of workplace diversity. More specifically, the intuitionist perspective of ethical theory reveals that there are certain moral obligations that all people should abide by, including justice, noninjury, fidelity, reparation, beneficence, self-improvement, gratitude, liberty, and obligations of manner (Audi, 2009). Applying the intuitionist concept of ethical theory to the business world, employees should be able to recognize circumstances with ethical implications. In organizational settings, it is typically the stakeholders who set the ethical guidelines. Though one may argue that there is no singular "right" ethics, it is possible to come up with a common ground to support coexistence. In a multicultural context, the determination of what is "right" or "wrong" may require serious considerations from a collective cultural framework (Giuliani et al., 2020). Such ethical decision-making may involve leadership from various cultural backgrounds with cultural specificities. Besides, the sense of knowing what is "right" to do for employees can also be adjusted or enhanced through diversity training programs to respect cultural nuances (Akpapuna et al., 2020). In the same vein, the fairness or justice aspect of the theory is also critically important for promoting inclusion in the organization. This approach ensures that all employees feel valued and treated equitably, encouraging a sense of belonging and respect among diverse employees. Dahanayake et al. (2018) suggest that applying justice and fairness to the core of diversity training practices can promote ethical behaviour in the workplace and lead to elevated organizational effectiveness. Similarly, the virtue aspect of ethical theory also aligns well with the idea of promoting workplace diversity and inclusion. Research has found that having a workplace environment that embraces virtuous actions among employees can result in a more harmonious and inclusive organizational culture, thereby improving organizational innovation and the ethical behaviour of all employees (Alzola, 2015). Altogether, the intuitionist aspect, the fairness or justice aspect, and the virtue

aspects of ethical theory provide invaluable insights into why such theory would serve as the keystone that guides how corporations can establish a more inclusive workplace culture.

    2.   Social Identity Theory

Another theory that builds on this study's theoretical background is social identity theory. The idea of "social identity" was first introduced by Tajfel in 1972, which described how individuals perceive themselves in terms of the social groups to which they belong while realizing that being a social member brings emotion and value meaning to oneself. There are three major outcomes associated with this theory in terms of organizations. First, employees typically prefer to carry out tasks that are consistent with their social identities, such as race, gender, nationality, and so forth. As a result, they become more favourable and are more likely to support the business with organizations that promote those identities (Tajfel, 1972). This emphasizes the importance of introducing workforce diversity. Second, social identity has been shown to positively correlate with employee loyalty and organisational pride (Tajfel, 1972). This impact influences crucial group outcomes, including collaboration, cohesion, and favourable group assessments. Third, employees may even elevate an organization's visions, goals, and strategies as they grow their identification with it, contributing to more innovative and desirable changes compared to other competitive organizations (Tajfel, 1972). Accordingly, these increasingly favourable assessments may result in higher employee loyalty and dedication to a company and its culture. It can be concluded that whether an organization is willing to help recognize an employee's social identity can impact their performance at work and the relationships they build with the company. This further explains why promoting workplace diversity is essential to improving employee engagement, ultimately resulting in better profits.

Moreover, the social identity theory also implies that employees constantly seek ways to earn their self-consciousness and self-identity through their affiliations with organizations. In other words, if employees do not perceive that their company is helping them strengthen their self-perceptions, they may strive to improve the company or, in the worst-case scenario, resign from their jobs. To avoid the potential negative outcomes, leaders should work with employees to discover their values and then demonstrate how the company can be supportive to let them feel more identified with the company.

**Why is workplace diversity important?**

As many articles have claimed, increasing organisational diversity can result in various desired outcomes for organizational strategy. The following is a list of the benefits associated with workplace diversity:

    i.       A greater sense of innovation and creativity

In today's rapidly changing business environment, characterized by high uncertainty and competitiveness, it is not guaranteed that any business will last in a competitive market unless the organization can constantly develop new ideas or knowledge. As a result, innovation and creativity are vital for organizations to thrive, as diversifying the workforce opens the door to tapping into a range of novel insights and experiences (Hiranandani, 2012). When multicultural workers join the organization, they each bring their unique viewpoints, which can encourage innovation development. This is because diverse perspectives and experiences can enrich discussions and decision-making processes, leading to a more robust solution. For instance, a study by Friedman et al. (2016) found that diverse teams had higher creativity and problem-solving skills than homogenous teams.

    ii.      Higher financial value for businesses

Companies with an overall diverse workforce tend to be more successful than those without an inclusive working environment (Norbash & Kadom, 2020). In addition, Wu et al. (2019) study revealed that diversity in the top management team is associated with higher firm value and long-term financial performance. These findings imply that promoting diversity at all levels of the workplace can lead to positive financial outcomes for organizations.

    iii.    A win-win result benefits both employees and organizations

Diversity in the workplace can also bring a range of benefits to employees. For instance, a diverse workplace enables an inclusive working environment for all employees, which makes them feel

respected and valued for bringing their unique identities and backgrounds to the organization. As a result, this may raise staff morale and increase job satisfaction, further promoting superior work retention. Meanwhile, diversity at work can also foster a more collaborative work environment, leading to increased productivity and success for individual employees and the organization.

     iv.       Improve public perception of the organization.

Lastly, research has demonstrated that consumers and stakeholders perceive organizations with diverse leadership as more socially responsible (Hoang et al., 2022). In addition, a diverse workplace can also improve an organization's reputation and image, fostering greater customer and public credibility (Roberson & Park, 2007). By promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace, organizations can demonstrate their commitment to fairness and equality, which can positively impact their public image and reputation.

**Why introduce diversity training?**

Canada is one of the largest and best-known immigration countries in the world, with over 250 diverse demographic profiles (Statistics Canada, 2017). Indeed, Statistics Canada predicts that future population growth within Canada will mostly be determined by immigration (Appelbaum et al., 2015).
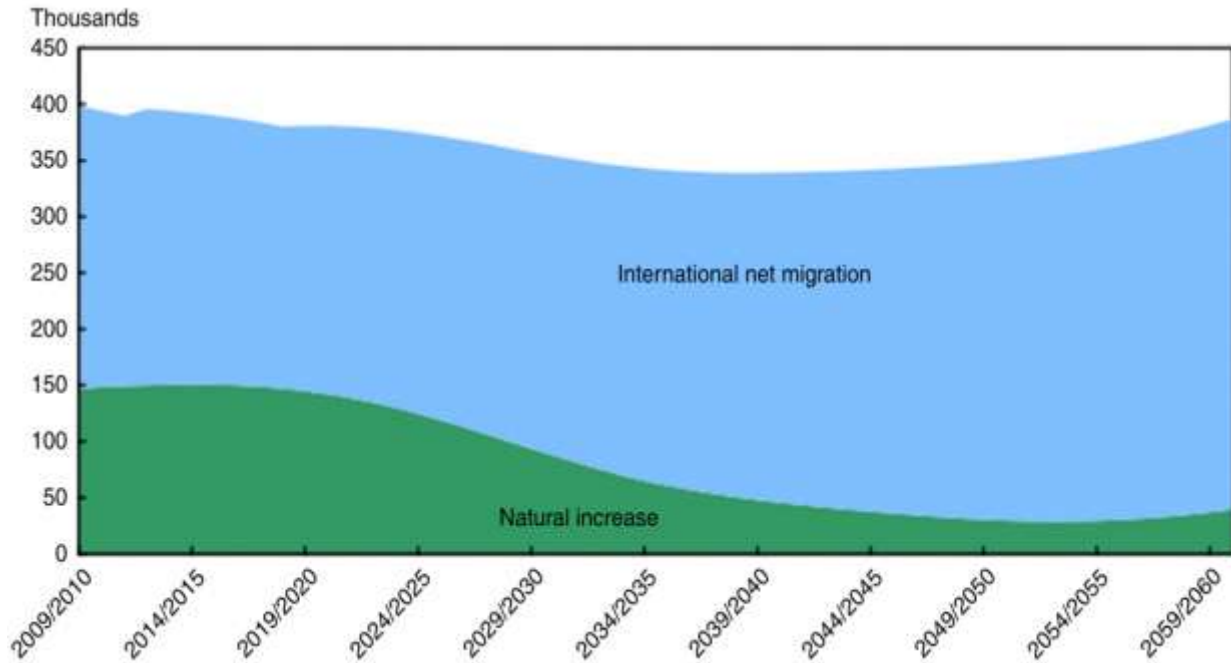
**Figure 1: Forecasted Canadian Population Demographic Growth From 2009/2010 to 2060/2061**

Figure 1 depicts the projected demographic growth of the Canadian population from 2009/2010 to 2060/2061, including natural growth and international net migration. As a result, immigrants will make up a substantial percentage of the workforce shortly, and the composition of Canadian workplaces will experience imminent changes to incorporate workers from various racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds. Additionally, many Canadian businesses will grow abroad, and such a process is called "globalization" (Robertson & White, 2007). The current challenge presented by globalization is how to prepare staff to cope with various worldwide clients and business partners (Dike, 2013). Consequently, adapting to the changes is necessary to lead a more ethnically diverse team. One of the most popular approaches to tackling diversity in the workplace is through various training programs, which can assist in raising awareness and a comprehensive understanding of the value and need for diversity, inform employees of cultural differences and how to handle conflicts, and help them become more knowledgeable about the culture that the organization represents. In this context, implementing diversity training programs can bring positive changes to organizations due to the following aspects:

1. Forming a better work environment for all employees

Diversity training can contribute to developing a more inclusive and welcoming workplace for all employees, irrespective of their background or identity. This is because diversity training has the potential to lessen bias, discrimination, and microaggressions in the workplace by raising awareness and comprehension of diversity concerns and, at the same time, advocating for more inclusive policies and practices, thus fostering a more supportive and friendly work environment for POC workers. According to social identity theory, employees are more likely to be engaged and devoted to their work when they feel valued and included (Tajfel, 1972). Because employees are more likely to be drawn to and remain with organizations that promote inclusion, such training programs may also positively change employee retention.

2. Being better equipped to serve a diverse customer base

The marketplace in Canada reflects a diversified clientele, showing that customers from different backgrounds have a diverse range of demands, preferences, and desires (Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 1998). Therefore, businesses should diversify their staff to understand better and serve a varied consumer base. Research claims that companies with employees that reflect the marketplace's diversity can better engage with and serve their client's needs (Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 1998). Effective communication is paramount in many business sectors, particularly in the customer service division. As a result, by hiring a diverse staff member in the team, customers who are from the same region as the customer service representatives may feel more at ease, and the sense of "feeling at home" with the representative helps customers develop trust and propensity with that company (Dike, 2013).

3. Promoting workplace collaboration among coworkers

Research states that it facilitates employee engagement and communication by fostering a respectful and understanding work environment (Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 1998). The team's inclusiveness and friendliness have increased employee satisfaction and happiness. Indeed, organizations cannot foster trust and collaboration among their workforce unless employees respect and value one another. Likewise, this is also the key to creating productive work teams and an effective working environment (Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 1998).

**Diversity dilemma**

While organizations increasingly recognize the value of workplace diversity and try to recruit a diverse workforce, many need help fully leveraging their diversity initiatives, leading to a gap between initial goals and outcomes. Recent literature conducted by May (2023) suggests that this type of gap may stem from organizational culture and that, despite having diverse hiring practices, organizations still need to integrate the perspectives and skills of their diverse employees fully. As a result, these employees may feel excluded in the workplace, leading to a failure in their diversity initiatives. Moreover, the diversity dilemma is further compounded by the need for more holistic approaches to inclusion. Implementing diversity training is an often-used strategy in organizations; however, it can fall short of creating changes alone. May (2023) argues that sometimes, even well-intentioned diversity training programs can provoke resistance and backlash among employees, and such attitudes can turn to tensions between employees, undermining the goals of building an inclusive environment. Another factor that could limit the effectiveness of diversity training stems from the implicit biases within the employees. Implicit biases refer to unconscious stereotypes that affect an individual's understanding, behaviours, and decisions in an unconscious way (Hahn et al., 2014). Onyeador et al. (2021) indicate that diversity training can fail to bring about changes because of ingrained biases deeply rooted in employees. Furthermore, this ineffectiveness results in the complexity of influencing the attitudes and behaviours of humans through short-term interventions. As such, while evidence suggests that diversity training can be a part of the solution to promoting workplace diversity, its effectiveness can be contingent on people's perspectives on others. Therefore, a more comprehensive approach is encouraged to help organizations benefit from the advantages of a diverse workforce.

**Scope of the research**

Although previous studies have looked at the effectiveness of diversity training within organizations, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant shifts in working styles, transitioning from in-person environments to virtual or hybrid models. Given these changes, whether the previous findings still apply during this transition period is worth studying.

Therefore, I aim to examine the impact of the pandemic on workplace diversity for different groups, including women, people of colour, indigenous populations, and sexual and gender minorities.

The main research questions are listed below:

**Research Question 1:** Did the pandemic allow people to collaborate and provide a sense of inclusion within the organization?

**Research Question 2:** Was the diversity training implemented during the pandemic effective for inclusion?

A survey is conducted to collect people's perceptions of those with a different self-identity. After an initial round of data collection, the survey items were interpreted using a mixed-methods data analysis, where the quantitative results were compared and contrasted using SPSS-Amos and the qualitative results were interpreted through software named QDA Miners, with general themes being generated according to the method of ground theory.

# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 EQUITY-DESERVING GROUPS IN THE WORKPLACE

Although there are numerous benefits to increasing workplace diversity, some significant challenges exist. The idea of promoting diversity in the workplace draws public attention to several equity-deserving groups, including but not limited to women, people of colour, indigenous populations, sexual and gender minorities, and people with disabilities. The following is a summary of the main difficulties and discriminations that those group members have commonly encountered:

### Women

It is noticeable that over the past half-century, women's participation in the labour force has undergone extraordinary development (Fassinger, 2005). Nevertheless, despite the significant improvements, women still struggle with occupational segregation, marginalization in leadership roles, and salary disparities (Fassinger, 2005). Busch (2020) discusses the persistent discrimination of occupational segregation for women, as it stems from the traditional view that male employees are expected to work outside the home. In contrast, women are relegated to roles within the house. He further reveals that despite the increased participation of women in the labour force, segregation in job types remains significant. Women are found to actively participate in lower-paying jobs, including healthcare and clerical work, and are underrepresented in high-paying industries such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields (Busch, 2020).

Moreover, Galsanjigmed and Sekiguchi (2023) highlight that male leadership often seems to be a good match for transactional styles, which tend to focus more on tasks and goals. In contrast, female leaders are prone to transformational leadership styles and emphasize humanistic care and empowerment. Due to these differences in leadership styles, women leaders are more likely to be stereotyped as overly emotional and less strategic, preventing them from acquiring higher positions. Similarly, Verdugo-Castro et al. (2022) reveal that men are concentrated in leadership positions

and women in administrative support roles. As such, this segregation in roles may not only limit women's career opportunities but also contribute to a further wage gap between gender groups.

**People of Color (POC)**

People of colour (POC) is a social classification that refers to individuals, not of white descent. This norm encompasses a wide range of racial and ethnic groups, and the major groups that belonged to this categorization in North America include, but are not limited to, black, Latino, Asian, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islanders, etc. (Aouragh, 2019). Due to the constrained timeframe of this study, the term POC is used in a broad, generalized sense. Though the intention is to examine the issues from a broader perspective, it is important to acknowledge that this research does not delve into the complexities of intersectionality (i.e., where the interplay of gender and ethnic minorities both exist). This limitation is explicitly addressed in the discussion section of the paper.

Data suggests that POC individuals are more likely than white people to experience precarious employment, which means positions that are unemployed, underpaid, or temporarily employed (Niosh, 2002). These workers are likely to face financial difficulty due to severance earnings, which is further exacerbated by the loss of health care and retirement benefits and leads to a corresponding difficulty in obtaining sufficient housing (Niosh, 2002). Even for those full-time employees who identify as people of colour, salary gaps still frequently exist when their levels of education, occupation, and work experience are comparable with those of white employees (Derenoncourt & Montialoux, 2021). Furthermore, Cunninghan (2020) suggests that the underrepresentation of black employees and other POCs in managerial roles can lead to a sense of not belonging and a lower self-concept at the workplace, which together are detrimental to employee well-being and productivity.

**Indigenous Populations**

Indigenous populations in Canada, including First Nations, Inuit populations, and Métis, are often not categorized under the general umbrella of POC. However, this group faces unique challenges

in the workplace that are distinct from those faced by other minority groups due to historical inequalities and ongoing discrimination. According to research, the unemployment rate was 11.6% for indigenous people, compared to 7.6% for non-indigenous counterparties, regardless of gender, age, and education status (Blakeney et al., 2021). Indigenous populations in Canada are one of the fastest-evolving labour workforce groups, but their equal participation is still not fully established. According to Statistics Canada (2022), the indigenous labour force employment rate was around 77.3% in 2022, whereas non-indigenous employment was 84.93%. The reason behind this disparity in hiring could be attributed to their different cultures, languages, and values, which may influence how indigenous populations interact with others in the workplace. Presbitero et al. (2016) state that the misunderstanding by coworkers and managers of indigenous cultural approaches to work is an issue for indigenous employees and the organizations that wish to keep them as members of a diverse workforce.

**Sexual and Gender Minorites**

The acronym 2SLGBTQIA+ includes both sexual and gender minorities (two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and the "+" sign represents other communities' identities related to gender and sexuality that are not covered by the initial letters). Individuals who belong to this categorization are often considered another equity-deserving group in the workplace (Reczek, 2020). These employees experience unfair working conditions, unequal rights, and injustice (Gacilo et al., 2018). Furthermore, the lack of occupational benefits such as health insurance coverage and pension funds also raise concerns about the welfare of sexual minority employees (Fassinger, 2008). A recent study by Maji et al. (2024) examined the well-being of sexual and gender minority employees, and they discovered that sexual and gender minority employees frequently experience negative workplace treatments, including both proximal, such as hiring and housing biases, and distal discrimination, such as an unsafe work environment and harassment. Tatum and Lent (2023) further reveal that these negative workplace experiences could lead to increased work-related stress, which, in turn, affects job satisfaction and the career decision-making of gender and sexual minority employees.

**People with Disabilities (PWD)**

People with disabilities (PWD) account for another equity-deserving group at work. People in this group vary across three major classifications, which range from physical limitations, such as mobility difficulty, sensory limitations, and hearing impairment, to issues relating to psychological well-being, such as depression and drug or alcohol addiction (Fassinger, 2008). PWD suffer from severe employment segregation and disempowerment and manifest the highest unemployment rates of any group (Yelin & Trupin, 2003). Societal factors such as stigma and unfair employment treatment have been linked to the low employment rate of PWD (Van Laer et al., 2022). Additionally, Annor et al. (2024) reveal that the barriers that these groups of people face at work are also frequently associated with a lack of transport and infrastructure and limited time and psychosocial resources. Because of these concerns, scholars, including Morelli et al. (2023), advocate the critical need for social, legal, and organizational changes to eliminate barriers that prevent PWD from fulfilling their social roles.

**2.2 FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSION**

For this study, I only focus on the minority group of POC, not the other types of diversity groups mentioned above. The framework of inclusion for POC employees was addressed in Shore et al.'s (2011) study on inclusion and diversity in workgroups. Building on the Optimal Distinctiveness Theory, which asserts that individuals desire to attain an optimal balance of inclusion and distinctiveness within and between social groups and situations (Sundararajan et al., 2019), Shore et al. (2011) propose the 2x2 framework of inclusion and argue that "uniqueness will provide opportunities for improved group performance when a unique individual is an accepted member of the group *and* the group values the particular, unique characteristic—the "Inclusion" cell in the 2x2 framework." While the premise is sound in that individuals, groups, and organizations (and societies in general) tend to place high or low values on uniqueness and belongingness, the issue with this approach to inclusion and inclusiveness or inclusivity is that 1] whoever is being included is "treated as an outsider and allowed/encouraged to retain uniqueness within the workgroup" (Shore et al., 2011), and 2] the individual is being included at the expense of someone else who

may be excluded. This is an inherent problem with even the word "inclusion." Someone is "allowing," and as such, it is not much different from "being tolerant" or "tolerating.".

## 2.3 PRE-COVID-19 WORKING CONDITIONS FOR POC

As previously stated, this paper focuses on cultural and ethical diversity in the workplace. Considering this, the following sections provide a more in-depth overview of the challenges this specific group of people faces at work in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

POC, which stands for "people of colour," is a social identification based on how a person is characterized by physical traits, such as skin tone, hair colour and type, and facial features (Daniels & Thornton, 2019). Since the early 1900s, fostering diversity in the workplace has gained enormous popularity. Despite this, there are recurrent indications that managing diversity is a difficult endeavour that calls for much more than good intentions. Especially in a multicultural context, diversity management can be complex due to a lack of understanding of different thoughts, values, and presuppositions in actions. For instance, Isotalus and Kakkuri-Knuuttila (2018) reveal that depending on one's cultural background, even the same behaviours in an identical setting may be conceptualized differently from diverse cultural perspectives. They also found that POC employees may hold different interpretations of the same vocabulary, such as "performance", "power", and "authenticity" etc. (Isotalus & Kakkuri-Knuuttila, 2018). Thus, unaware of such disparities can lead to misinterpretations, unintended conflicts, and contradictions with coworkers. Moreover, negative attitudes towards diverse employees can significantly impede workplace interactions and undermine team cohesion among employees from various cultural backgrounds (Yadav & Lenka, 2020). In the following sections, the empirical findings of the major challenges associated with POC employees will be deciphered further.

### 2.3.1 DISCRIMINATION

Workplace discrimination comprises a series of harmful behaviours that can be highly detrimental to employees' work performance and personal well-being (Banerjee, 2008). Social identity theory

suggests that people form their social identity by categorizing themselves and others into different social groups according to the social context (i.e., ethnicity and gender) (Tajfel, 1972). Thereby, people tend to view people who are different from them as having an out-group identity. For this reason, POC employees are easily treated negatively due to visible differences such as appearance and accent. On a global scale, workplace discriminatory practices are found to be more prevalent among POC employees than among native employees. Indicatively, DiJulio et al. (2015) found that 53% of black employees have experienced unfair treatment based on ethnicity, compared to 15% of Caucasian employees reporting comparable situations around 30 days at work (DiJulio et al., 2015). Similar findings have been reported in a larger-scale study. According to a US study from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, racial discrimination in the workplace was the cause of about 34% of the 84,254 accusations that were lodged in 2017. In contrast, only 10% of Caucasians receive similar treatment (Daniels & Thornton, 2019). In Canada, Reitz and Banerjee (2007) revealed that approximately 10% of Caucasians perceived discrimination over the previous five years at work. In contrast, 35.9% of visible minorities reported experiencing discrimination during the same period.

Another possible explanation for why POC employees are more prone to mistreatment is the impact of cultural differences. Triandis (2000) found that cultural disparities can lead to misunderstandings or conflicts in interactions, particularly between natives and people from other cultural backgrounds. Since POC employees may not be able to adhere to the cultural norms of the native population, they are more likely to face aggression as a form of punishment. Such negative behaviour toward the target individuals may trigger their isolation from the organization.

Moreover, racial discrimination has serious consequences in the workplace. Researchers have found that workplace incivility has been related to high stress, lower job satisfaction, and greater turnover intentions (Lim et al., 2008). Andersson and Pearson (1999) posited that continuous incivility might eventually escalate to violent colleague behaviour. In extreme cases, workplace bullying can lead to psychological distress like depression and lower self-confidence for the bullied. employees and may require clinical recovery or medical treatment (Bergbom et al., 2015).

## 2.3.2 BIASES

In the workplace context, the importance of communication cannot be overstated. As such, the disparity in language and accent between natives and POC employees is becoming even more salient. A study highlights that about 72% of foreign-born Hispanic immigrants self-reported that they face challenges due to language barriers, and this language gap impedes their employment opportunities (Passel & D'Vera Cohn, 2009). Even for immigrants fluent in local language skills, their non-native accent can still cause negative perceptions. Queen (1998) states that groups with accents from lower socioeconomic countries can attract bias, unlike the majority groups' accents, which are considered more favourable. Such biases are not just associated with comprehensibility but also with prejudiced attitudes toward certain accents. Another study by Hosoda et al. (2012) discovered that job candidates with Mexican Spanish accents are deemed less suitable than those with a standard American English accent. These linguistic differences may lead to elevated mistreatment, in which POC employees could be perceived as being less intelligent, dedicated, and committed (Colella & King, 2018). Due to these invalid biases, POC employees are held to lower standards, which results in discrimination in recruiting and promotion procedures or even isolation from organizational networks and resources (Nardon et al., 2021). Research has shown that immigrant workers frequently hold inferior jobs with few prospects to advance in the organizational structure (Subeliani & Tsogas, 2005). In Canada, skilled immigrants who come from certain nations like China (Man, 2004), the Philippines (Aten et al., 2016), and Africa (Creese & Wiebe, 2012) confirm similar experiences of deskilling and downward occupational mobility (Nardon et al., 2021).

### 2.3.3 STEREOTYPING

In retrospect to the historical context of immigration, East Asians were initially welcomed as the labour workforce in North America, but their success eventually provoked negative reactions. Fears that they were an economic threat led to the "yellow peril" stereotype (Fong, 1998). This stereotype was selective, favouring skilled and educated immigrants, framing East Asians as a danger to white societal norms, and fostering the notion that East Asians should remain in their assigned jobs without challenging the status quo (Fong, 1998). The view of East Asians as competent may lead to dislike and envy in the workplace, potentially reinforcing prejudice and a desire to limit their advancement. Despite professional achievements, East Asian employees are

disproportionately absent from management roles, enforcing societal expectations for this group to occupy subordinate jobs in the workplace. Berdahl & Min (2012) suggest that this dual impact of stereotypes promotes the idea that East Asians are fit for technical roles due to their perceived competence but are not suited for leadership positions because of a lack of dominance. On the other hand, East Asian employees who defy these stereotypes by exhibiting dominance face adverse treatment, including enhanced likelihood of harassment and reduced likability in the workplace (Jost et al., 2004). The negative consequences of stereotype violations happen to be specific to East Asians, as opposed to other racial minorities.

Another group of people who often encounter workplace stereotypes are Black individuals. These stereotypes can range from assumptions regarding professionalism, work ethic, and intelligence (Holder et al., 2015). In the last century, Katz and Braly (1933) investigated people's perceptions of Black stereotypes and asked participants to select the adjectives that people frequently use to identify the target group. The findings of this study showed that people tend to choose negative adjectives such as lazy and ignorant to describe Black individuals, revealing that workplace stereotypes that Black people face are deeply rooted in systemic racism and historical biases. In a more recent study, Reynolds-Dobbs et al. (2008) confirmed the previous study's findings. They indicated that modern stereotypes in which Black women are portrayed as crazy women with strong emotions (aggressive, hostile) set barriers for Black women in professional development opportunities. There is also strong evidence that Black men are disadvantaged in the labour market due to the widespread stereotypes that they are violent, criminal, and dangerous (Collins, 2004). As a result, Black employees frequently find themselves being scrutinized more for their actions compared to their counterparts, and they are often assigned to narrow roles based on prejudiced expectations, which in turn fosters a culture of inequality within the organization (Pedulla, 2014). These stereotypes negatively affect their daily interactions at the workplace and cause limitations in professional growth.

### 2.3.4 MICROAGGRESSION

Microaggression is another hurdle at work that POC employees regularly face. It refers to subtle daily insults, including explicit verbal and nonverbal attacks that are either intentional or

unintentional (Sue et al., 2008). People who commit microaggressions often do not realize that their interactions with ethnic minorities contain such offensive behaviours. For instance, the negative compliment of a manager toward an African American male worker, "Your English is so fluent and articulate", is an act of workplace microaggression. Although the initial idea is to commend an employee's language skills, it implies that a person can use English well, even if he is African American.

Similarly, another example would be to tell an African American female, "You do not resemble the typical African American woman," which implies that her appearance sets her apart from the shared racial treatment of other African Americans (DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby, 2016). As such, POC employees consistently experience subtle insults at an individual or group level and are constantly reminded of their lower social standing as a devalued group (Sue, 2010). Torres et al. (2010) indicate that African Americans frequently find themselves in a position where they must repeatedly demonstrate their capabilities and receive astonishment from their managers and co-workers who might have originally doubted their competence at work. These adverse judgments can create a feeling of being belittled and restrict their access to professional networks in the workplace (Sue et al., 2007). In addition, these treatments can be destructive to POC employees' self-esteem and require time for emotional healing after such slights. The stress of working in a hostile working environment for the victims can cause problems such as anger, frustration, and burnout (Holder et al., 2015). In the most severe cases, failure of anger control can cause mental health issues, including persistent resentment, depression, or even drug abuse (Franklin, 2004).

## 2.4 CHALLENGES OF WORKPLACE DIVERSITY FOR POC IN THE COVID-19 CRISIS

Entering the year 2020, since the first case of the coronavirus (COVID-19) was reported in Wuhan City, China, the pandemic has dramatically changed the world in many aspects (Jeung et al., 2020). In terms of workplace diversity, the pandemic has not only amplified existing issues but also created new challenges for all POC employees. The following section illustrates the major problems associated with the change.

## 2.4.1 GREATER DISCRIMINATION

Research indicates that the pandemic has intensified the discrimination faced by POC employees in the workplace (Cheng, 2020). For example, POC employees have been reported to be disproportionately affected by the pandemic due to their higher presence in lower-level positions. Kantamneni (2020) discovers that social distancing practices have exacerbated the underemployment rate for African American and black employees in the United States. In addition, a study in England investigated the workplace treatments of healthcare employees that differed by racial group during the pandemic and found that staff from ethnic minority groups encountered harassment from patients and coworkers at a much higher level compared to white British workers (Rhead et al., 2023). Another qualitative study revealed that staff from ethnic minority groups often respond to microaggressions and bullying by either transferring to different teams or quitting their positions (Woodhead et al., 2022).

Moreover, research indicates that stressful work conditions, such as heavy workloads and shortages in staffing, may intensify instances of bullying and discrimination (Woodhead et al., 2022). Consequently, the unprecedented stress brought on by the pandemic may lead to an increase in bullying and harassment against POC employees. Schubert et al. (2021) indicate that discrimination-related stress can lead to reduced self-esteem and self-efficacy, which adversely affects their mental and physical well-being (Rhead et al., 2023). As such, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the levels of discrimination, leading to unfavourable changes in attitudes and behaviours concerning how people interact with one another at work.

## 2.4.2 HOSTILITY

One major issue is the increase in discrimination and xenophobic behaviour towards the Asian population, as misinformation and fear have widely spread about the virus and its origins. Psychologists believe psychological responses to such behaviour are caused by individuals seeking explanations through attributions of blame (Strong, 1990). This can make the workplace inhospitable or uncomfortable for a certain group of people, and it may even pose a serious risk to the mental health and safety of all POC in the workplace. According to Gardner et al. (2021), 22.5%

of the respondents who are Asian Americans living in the US reported they experienced COVID-19-related discrimination, and 14% of the incidents occurred in the workplace. Notably, this survey was carried out at a time when many participants were not yet physically back to work, and the findings indicated that there may be an increase in anti-Asian racism in the US (Gardner et al., 2021). The study's participants, meanwhile, reported feeling "othered" or "targeted" due to their social identities, not because they were excluded but rather because they were more conspicuous as a result of the pandemic (Gardner et al., 2021). The depreciation of self-identity in Asian communities is linked to unpleasant feelings, increased awareness of potential discrimination, and behavioural changes, including withdrawal and avoidance (Gardner et al., 2021). Among all ethnicities, individuals with Chinese backgrounds were targeted the most by the influence of social media, and politicians used the terms "Chinese virus" and "Kung flu" to label the COVID-19 virus (Tessler et al., 2020). Shang et al. (2021) revealed that those Asian Canadians and Asian American healthcare workers reported experiencing blatantly harmful treatments, including direct avoidance (e.g., patients request treatment from a non-Asian physician), defamatory slander (e.g., charges of consuming bats and dogs), and offensive statements (e.g., return to China). These encounters leave POC employees of Asian ancestry feeling angry, frustrated, and isolated at the workplace.

Moreover, Gardner et al. (2021) found that such prejudices have the potential to affect Asians of all backgrounds because bias occurs in situations involving Chinese (e.g., Wang) and non-Chinese names (e.g., Nguyen). Similarly, another study looks at workplace consequences, and the results suggest that the pandemic has brought several detrimental effects on the Asian community, such as decreased employee hiring and increased physical distancing of Asians at work. As such, pandemic-induced hostility was salient for members of the Asian community, disregarding the differences among the various racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds (Shang et al., 2021).

### 2.4.3 UNEMPLOYMENT

As part of government policies to prevent the spread of the virus, various types of restrictions, such as border closures, travel restrictions, and business closures, have been implemented to ensure social distancing among the population. As a result, these implements cause significant negative impacts on the economy and trigger a spike in unemployment for all groups (Canilang

et al., 2020). Nevertheless, POC employees have reportedly been more likely to lose their employment or face financial difficulty during the pandemic because of industrial closures or a lack of necessary safeguards, such as adequate housing conditions and a limited internet connection (Canilang et al., 2020). In the US, the unemployment rate due to the pandemic for Black employees rose to 29.8%, which is 8.5% higher than for White employees (Couch et al., 2020). Latinx staff were also severely affected by the pandemic, as their skill levels were more susceptible to job losses, and they had the lowest chance to work remotely among all groups, sustainably less than that for White employees (Fairlie, 2020). Wanberg (2012) states that besides income loss, the unemployed staff may have stress-induced consequences such as anxiety, depression, and other mental illnesses.

## 2.4.4 INEQUALITIES

Within the UK, healthcare professionals identified as Black, Asian, and other minority ethnic backgrounds constitute 20% of nurses and 44% of doctors (Cook et al., 2020). However, 70% of healthcare staff who have died from the pandemic come from these same groups with similar patterns as in the US (Cookson & Milne, 2020). The relatively high death rate of POC healthcare employees in the UK due to the pandemic has caught attention. The underlying causes are multifaceted; however, one possible explanation may be linked to deep-rooted structural racism, which has placed POC staff in lower-level jobs that require more front-line duty and a higher risk of exposure to COVID-19 (Rhead et al., 2023). Recent analysis indicates that POC employees were more likely to be assigned to areas with a high risk of COVID-19 since they were not able to contest or change such decisions (Levene et al., 2020). Another survey investigated work inequalities in the healthcare sector in response to the pandemic and found that disparities have been exacerbated by disproportionately inadequate access to personal protective equipment (PPE). In this survey, 1119 UK healthcare workers were recruited from diverse ethnic backgrounds, and the finding suggests that 96% of POC participants attributed the spread of the virus among healthcare staff to insufficient PPE, compared to 75% of White participants (Chisnall & Vindrola-Padros, 2021). Similar experiences were recorded in another

survey of 4418 nursing staff in the UK, which found that individuals from ethnic minorities were more prone to issues of accessing PPE compared to White British staff (Ali et al., 2021).

## 2.5 SUMMARY

In line with pre-COVID scenarios, the obstacles associated with workplace diversity still exist during the pandemic. In response to the government's call, many businesses have adopted home-working regulations as a safety precaution, which has changed workers' working environments from physical to virtual. This transition in working style has not only changed the physical locale of work but has also affected how people interact. Prior to the pandemic, people could collaborate in a way to be able to notice the nuances of in-person communication, including non-verbal cues, body language, and instant feedback (Marra et al., 2022). However, it is challenging to maintain the same level of interpersonal connection when transforming into a virtual workplace. In the context of remote working, video meetings and digital messaging have become the new norm, which leads to less spontaneous communication (McGloin et al., 2022). Besides, this shift to a virtual work environment also challenges some POC employees regarding new technology adaptation and overcoming time zone nuances (Pinnington & Ayoko, 2021). As such, the diverse and dynamic nature of the workplace has been significantly hampered due to pandemic-induced changes in the working environment, and it is unclear to what extent these changes have influenced people's connections during this period of remote or hybrid working.

## 2.6 ISSUES AND GAPS

Although workforce diversity has long been strongly promoted to boost productivity and profit, social attitudes may remain the same, particularly as the COVID-19 pandemic enters and upends the pre-existing working environment. Therefore, research is needed to reveal the potential difficulties in workplace interactions for people due to the interruption caused by the pandemic. Furthermore, when researchers predict a surge in immigration to Canada, long-term workplace diversity solutions become ever more critical to assisting with the changes in the future business

landscape. While it is commendable that many businesses have taken measures to promote cross-cultural understanding through training programs such as intercultural workshops, cultural awareness conferences, and other activities, these diversity training programs are merely scratching the surface of altering workplace diversity management. Moreover, the extent to which the pandemic has influenced the effectiveness of those diversity training efforts needs to be clarified, which is another important research gap to unpack.

# CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

As a recap of the introduction, this research focuses on two research questions, based on which the survey was developed: 1. Did the pandemic allow people to collaborate and provide a sense of inclusion within the organization? 2. Was the diversity training implemented during the pandemic effective for inclusion? To conduct the survey item, I applied the concept and collected primary data from a TAEC model of diversity to explore the research questions. Figure 2 below illustrates the conceptual model of the TAEC model. Specifically, the concept of the TAEC model is driven by Sundararajan et al.'s (2019) study, in which it is proposed that a diverse society should gradually progress through four stages of attitudes: from tolerance to Acceptance, then Embracing and ultimately Celebrating diversity. The TAEC survey is designed in Qualtrics to be conducted on the Prolific platform to collect data from participants about their cognitive and affective responses when they meet new people or people who are different from them and their thoughts about collaboration and working with others. In total, there are 61 items in the original TAEC survey conducted with a 10-point Likert scale, organized into five sections: Connected Knowing (10 items), Separate Knowing (10 items adapted from Galotti et al.'s 1999 ATTL Scale), Affect or Emotions (24 items from Sundararajan et al., 2016), TAEC (13 items developed specifically for this study), and Team Dynamics (11 items from Sundararajan, 2009). Details of the original TAEC survey can be seen in Table 9 in Appendix I. The target sample comprises adults aged 18 and above from different nationalities, industries, and socio-economic backgrounds. The survey aims to recruit 280–300 participants to ensure an adequate response rate, as the number of respondents should be approximately four to ten times the number of survey items, according to the rule of thumb.

For this study, I incorporated six additional items into the survey. I asked participants about their attitudes towards change and their experiences, if any, during the pandemic while collaborating with their coworkers. Further information regarding the six items can be found in Table 1 from the Appendix I section of this study.
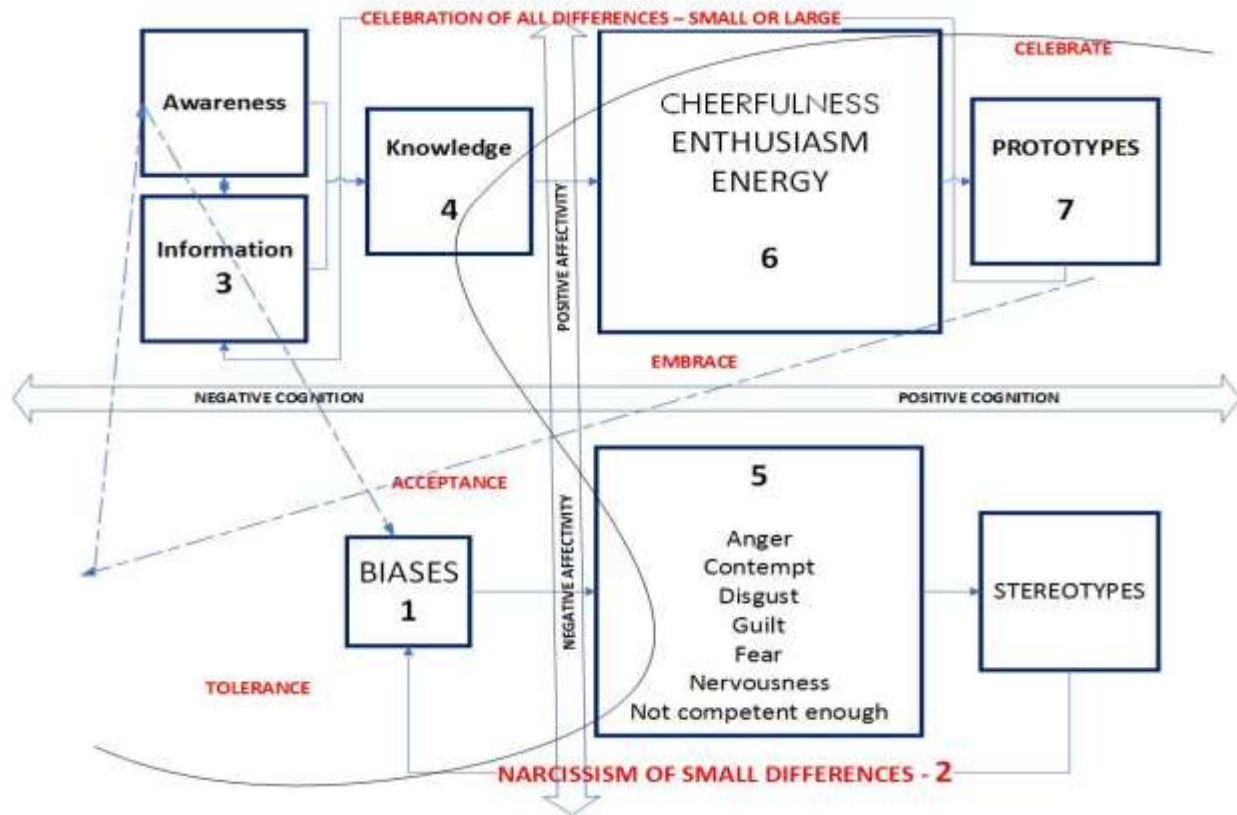
**Figure 2: The TAEC Model of Diversity (Sundararajan et al, 2019)**

The six pandemic-related questions from the TAEC survey will be analyzed and interpreted using statistical methods such as simple correlations, t-tests, and path analysis using AMOS (SPSS) software. Further details of these questions can be found in Appendix I. In addition, the last two open-ended questions, which can be seen in the Appendix I section, will be analyzed using content analysis software called QDA Miner to generate common themes and results using the qualitative research method.

## CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

## 4.1 PRELIMINARY RESULTS

At the time of this writing, I have completed an initial round of data collection on the Prolific platform. In total, there were 200 completed responses, and 3 were incomplete. While the TAEC model survey is comprehensive, the focus of these preliminary results is on six items in the survey that specifically ask respondents about their experiences of diversity in their workplace and community and the impact of the pandemic on their abilities to connect with those who are different from themselves (the respondents). I present the respondents' demographic information below: from Canada and the USA only.

## 4.1.1 DEMOGRAPHICS

According to the TAEC survey results, the majority of participants were Canadian (53.23%), followed by Americans (37.31%), with 9.45% selecting "others". However, it should be noted that the participants who selected "others" lived in Canada or the USA. In addition, the country of origin of those who were "others" ranged from many other countries worldwide. Regarding gender, 51.50% of participants self-identified as male, while 44.00% identified as female. A small percentage of participants (2.50%) identified as "they" or "them," and a few (2.00%) preferred not to say. The educational background of participants varied; most had bachelor's degrees (46.00%), and at least 27.00% had high school diplomas. The participants' occupations were also diverse, with nearly 200 different occupations represented, ranging from carpenters to students and research analysts to IT support specialists. In general, the results ensure the variety of occupations in this survey. Please refer to Table 4 in Appendix I for more detailed demographic information.

## 4.1.2 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

I present below the descriptive statistics of the six items, followed by the results of a paired samples T-test.

**Statistics**

| | | Participant ID | Pandemic - During the pandemic, I found it difficult to make connections with people who are different from me. | Pandemic - Because of the pandemic, I do not feel engaged with my coworkers, whether like me or different from me. | Pandemic - The pandemic caused me to feel more ignored, because of who I identify as. | Pandemic - Remote work did not help me connect with new coworkers, especially those different from me. | Pandemic - While my company had diversity training during the pandemic, I feel it was not useful and did not allow my coworkers from getting to know me better | Pandemic - We need to have better diversity training approaches and policies in the organization. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 202 | 199 | 199 | 199 | 199 | 199 | 199 |
| | Missing | 0 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Mean | | | 3.28 | 3.35 | 2.56 | 3.88 | 3.45 | 4.21 |
| Std. Error of Mean | | | .128 | .127 | .114 | .123 | .111 | .121 |
| Std. Deviation | | | 1.803 | 1.788 | 1.603 | 1.739 | 1.562 | 1.704 |
| Variance | | | 3.252 | 3.197 | 2.571 | 3.026 | 2.441 | 2.905 |
| Skewness | | | .347 | .312 | 1.044 | -.121 | .134 | -.303 |
| Std. Error of Skewness | | | .172 | .172 | .172 | .172 | .172 | .172 |
| Kurtosis | | | -.999 | -1.005 | .208 | -.837 | -.461 | -.591 |
| Std. Error of Kurtosis | | | .343 | .343 | .343 | .343 | .343 | .343 |

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Six, Pandemic-Related Items from the TAEC Survey**

**Paired Samples Test**

| | | Paired Differences | | | | | | | Significance | |
| | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | | |
| | | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | Lower | Upper | t | df | One-Sided p | Two-Sided p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pair 1 | Pandemic - We need to have better diversity training approaches and policies in the organization. - Pandemic - During the pandemic, I found it difficult to make connections with people who are different from me. | .935 | 2.099 | .149 | .641 | 1.228 | 6.282 | 198 | <.001 | <.001 |
| Pair 2 | Pandemic - We need to have better diversity training approaches and policies in the organization. - Pandemic - Because of the pandemic, I do not feel engaged with my coworkers, whether like me or different from me. | .864 | 2.054 | .146 | .577 | 1.151 | 5.936 | 198 | <.001 | <.001 |
| Pair 3 | Pandemic - We need to have better diversity training approaches and policies in the organization. - Pandemic - The pandemic caused me to feel more ignored, because of who I identify as. | 1.648 | 1.866 | .132 | 1.387 | 1.909 | 12.461 | 198 | <.001 | <.001 |
| Pair 4 | Pandemic - We need to have better diversity training approaches and policies in the organization. - Pandemic - Remote work did not help me connect with new coworkers, especially those different from me. | .332 | 2.008 | .142 | .051 | .612 | 2.330 | 198 | .010 | .021 |
| Pair 5 | Pandemic - While my company had diversity training during the pandemic, I feel it was not useful and did not allow my coworkers from getting to know me better - Pandemic - During the pandemic, I found it difficult to make connections with people who are different from me. | .176 | 1.668 | .118 | -.057 | .409 | 1.488 | 198 | .069 | .138 |
| Pair 6 | Pandemic - While my company had diversity training during the pandemic, I feel it was not useful and did not allow my coworkers from getting to know me better - Pandemic - Because of the pandemic, I do not feel engaged with my coworkers, whether like me or different from me. | .106 | 1.721 | .122 | -.135 | .346 | .865 | 198 | .194 | .388 |
| Pair 7 | Pandemic - While my company had diversity training during the pandemic, I feel it was not useful and did not allow my coworkers from getting to know me better - Pandemic - The pandemic caused me to feel more ignored, because of who I identify as. | .889 | 1.493 | .106 | .681 | 1.098 | 8.402 | 198 | <.001 | <.001 |
| Pair 8 | Pandemic - While my company had diversity training during the pandemic, I feel it was not useful and did not allow my coworkers from getting to know me better - Pandemic - Remote work did not help me connect with new coworkers, especially those different from me. | -.427 | 1.558 | .110 | -.645 | -.209 | -3.867 | 198 | <.001 | <.001 |

**Table 3: Paired-Samples T-Test of Six Items**

Looking at the descriptive statistics for the six items, I notice that, in general, the means appear to be on par with one another, and while there is some skew with one item, where the respondents felt that the pandemic caused them to feel more ignored because of whom they identified as most other item responses do not show dramatic differences. I ran a reliability analysis on these six items and received a Cronbach Alpha of 0.85. Interitem correlations ranged from 0.309 to 0.631, indicating healthy relationships among these six items. The ANOVA with Tukey's nonaddivity test yielded an F value of 174.973, $p < 0.001$, while Hotelling's T-Squared was 196.925, F=38.589, $p < 0.001$. I find these results robust and reliable. Table 3 shows the results of the Paired-Samples T-test. I generated eight pairs, with items 5 (We need to have better diversity training approaches and policies in our organizations) and 6 (While my company had diversity training during the pandemic, I feel it was not useful and did not allow my coworkers from getting to know me better), with each of the other four items, that explored whether respondents found it difficult to connect with coworkers different from them during the pandemic, did not feel engaged, felt ignored, and remote work was a barrier in making the connections. As can be seen from Table 3, for pairs 5 and 6, all others show statistical significance at $p < 0.05$ levels. This indicates that something happened during the pandemic that possibly broke existing connections. While there could be any number of reasons, like fatigue (Conrad et al., 2022), or indeed, as the results point out, the diversity training was not useful. To probe this further, I added two open-ended questions to the survey, which I discuss in Section 4.3.

## 4.2 DATA ANALAYSIS OF THE REST OF THE TAEC SURVEY

### 4.2.1 RELIABILITY ANALYSIS

I conducted a reliability analysis on the six categories of items and found that all six sets had slightly poor to great Cronbach Alpha reliability scores. Connected Knowing (10 items) had a Cronbach Alpha score of 0.877 (F-28.78; $p < 0.001$), Separate Knowing (10 items), had a Cronbach Alpha score of 0.793 (F-70.1; $p < 0.001$), Affect or Emotions (24 items) had a Cronbach Alpha score of 0.858 (F-214.1; $p < 0.001$), TAEC (13 items developed for the study) had a Cronbach Alpha score of 0.769; $p < 0.001$), Team Dynamics (11 items), had a Cronbach Alpha

score of 0.635 (F-70.45; p < 0.001), and Remote work and diversity training during the pandemic (6 items developed for the study) had a Cronbach Alpha score of 0.848 (F-42.25; p < 0.001). I note that the Team Dynamics score, tested across time and in various studies, had higher reliability scores. However, for some reason, these were below the acceptable level of 0.7 in this dataset. Two items in this set asked whether respondents liked teamwork and whether they had no choice but to work on teams, and the responses to these two items could have caused the reliability scores to be lower than the accepted norm.

## 4.2.2 DIMENSION REDUCTION

The next step was to conduct a dimension reduction on the six sets of items. The connected knowing items (10) were reduced to two dimensions, which explained about 60% of the variance. I named these ConKnow_Interested and ConKnow_Empathetic. The Separate Knowing items (10) were also reduced to two dimensions, which I named SepKnow_Logician and SepKnow_Objective, and these explained about 51% of the variance. These two sets comprise the cognitive aspect of how individuals approach new people, new information, and how well they understand the points of view put forward by others, as well as their own approach to treating this information empathetically or objectively, i.e., only reason and logic, as opposed to having an emotional component to processing the received information. The Affect Items (24) asked participants about their emotions when meeting new people, people different from themselves, or encountering or working in situations involving people from different cultures, ethnicities, sexual, or gender identities. These 24 items were reduced to five dimensions that explained about 75% of the variance, and we named them Joy_Curious, Enthu_Open, Neg_Emotions, Knowledgeable, and Ignorant. The TAEC (Tolerance, Acceptance, Embrace, and Celebrate) items (13 in number) were reduced to four dimensions, explaining about 66.5% of the variance. I named these TAEC: Stand_Up_Look_For_Good, Respect_Proud_Of_Culture, and Risk_Change_Averse. The Team Dynamics items (11) were reduced to three dimensions explaining about 64% of the variance, and these were named Enjoy_Teamwork, Contribute_Respect, and Solo_Flyer. Finally, the six items that asked participants about their experiences in remote work during the pandemic and any diversity training they underwent in their organizations were reduced only to one dimension, so I retained them as six individual items in the analysis.

## 4.2.3 PATH ANALYSIS USING AMOS

I decided to adopt a path analysis approach and settled on using AMOS with SPSS to analyze the path diagrams. While the multivariate procedure in the SPSS GLM would have also worked, having had prior experience with AMOS and the relative ease with which to run multiple regressions with multiple input and outcome variables, AMOS was deemed more suitable. Also, with a dataset of around 205 valid responses (roughly 1:4 with 67 items), I feel that this approach would provide me with the insights necessary to proceed with the larger temporal model as the next stage of this study. I first ran the Connected and Separate Knowing Reduced dimensions against the TAEC dimensions. The path diagram is illustrated in Figure 3.

*Connected and Separate Knowing Items vs. TAEC Dimensions*
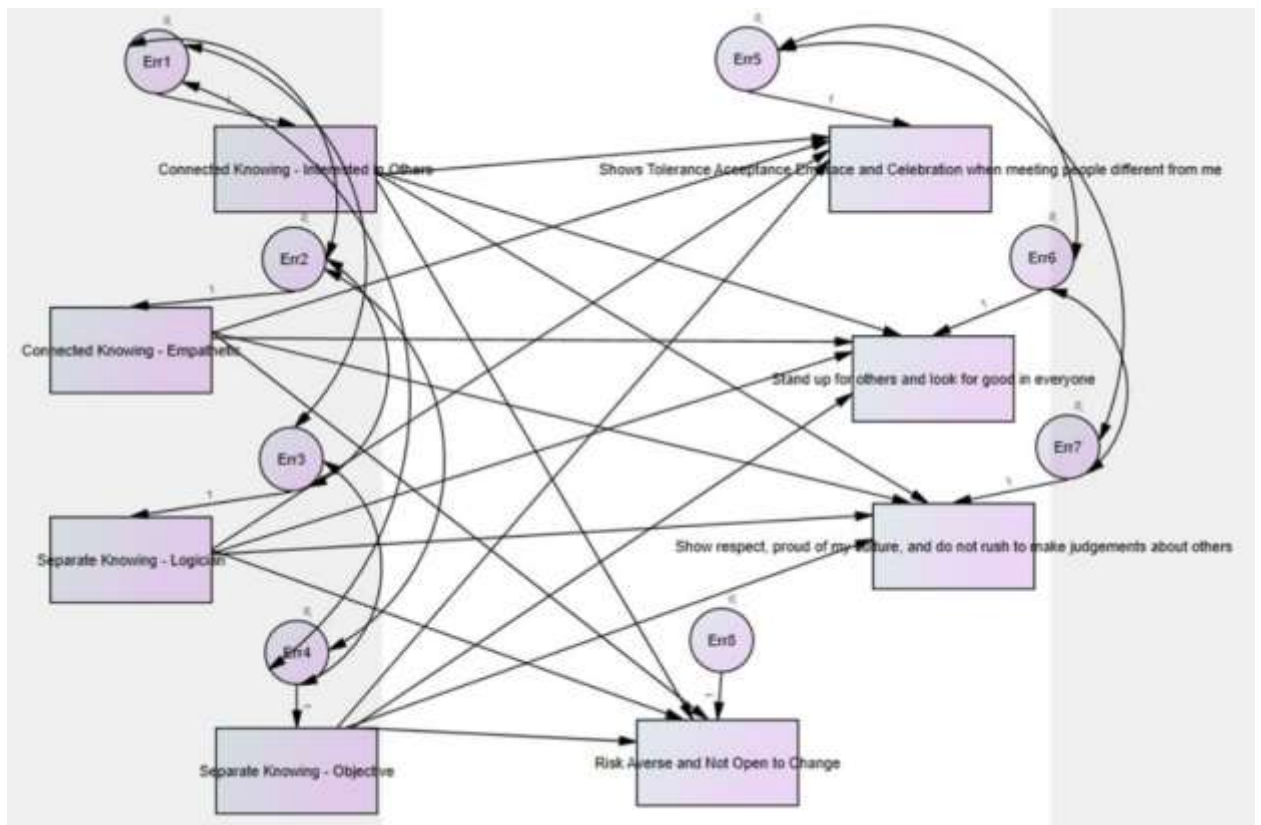


**Figure 3: Path Diagram – Connected and Separate Knowing vs TAEC Items**

Upon running the analysis procedure in AMOS, a minimum was achieved with a Chi Square value of 3.040, p = 0.385. The Chi-Square value could not be reduced any further. The NFI (0.983), IFI (1.000), and CFI (1.000) all indicated a very good model fit. The critical ratios and their significant values are presented in Table 4.

| | | | Estimate | S.E. | C.R. | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TAEC | <--- | ConKnow_Interested | .518 | .059 | 8.718 | *** |
| Stand_Up_Look_For_Good | <--- | ConKnow_Interested | .258 | .068 | 3.791 | *** |
| Respect_Proud_of_Culture | <--- | ConKnow_Interested | .048 | .072 | .665 | .506 |
| Risk_Change_Averse | <--- | ConKnow_Interested | -.114 | .072 | -1.595 | .111 |
| TAEC | <--- | ConKnow_Empath | .124 | .062 | 1.987 | .047 |
| Stand_Up_Look_For_Good | <--- | ConKnow_Empath | .248 | .071 | 3.486 | *** |
| Respect_Proud_of_Culture | <--- | ConKnow_Empath | .161 | .075 | 2.136 | .033 |
| Risk_Change_Averse | <--- | ConKnow_Empath | -.185 | .075 | -2.454 | .014 |
| TAEC | <--- | SepKnow_Logician | -.186 | .058 | -3.216 | .001 |
| Stand_Up_Look_For_Good | <--- | SepKnow_Logician | .190 | .066 | 2.883 | .004 |
| Respect_Proud_of_Culture | <--- | SepKnow_Logician | -.074 | .070 | -1.056 | .291 |
| Risk_Change_Averse | <--- | SepKnow_Logician | -.118 | .070 | -1.698 | .089 |
| TAEC | <--- | SepKnow_Objective | .090 | .063 | 1.432 | .152 |
| Stand_Up_Look_For_Good | <--- | SepKnow_Objective | -.046 | .072 | -.632 | .527 |
| Respect_Proud_of_Culture | <--- | SepKnow_Objective | .081 | .076 | 1.062 | .288 |
| Risk_Change_Averse | <--- | SepKnow_Objective | .095 | .076 | 1.243 | .214 |

**Table 4: Critical Ratios – Connected and Separate Knowing vs TAEC Items**

From Table 4, I note that ConKnow_Interested is statistically significant with the TAEC dimension (CR = 8.718; p < 0.001) and the Stand_Up_Look_For_Good dimension (CR = 3.791; p < 0.001). ConKnow_Empathetic is also statistically significant with TAEC (CR = 1.981; P = 0.047), Stand_Up_Look_For_Good (CR = 3.486; p < 0.001), Respect_Proud_Of-Culture (CR = 2.136; p = 0.033), and negatively significant with Risk_Change_Averse (CR = -2.454; p = 0.014). In the same vein, SepKnow_Logician was negatively significant with TAEC (CR = -3.216; P = 0.001) and significant with Stand_Up_Look_For_Good (CR = 2.883; p = 0.004). All other results were

not statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level, though there are some other interesting results at the $p < 0.10$ level.

These results do provide insights into the idea that those who profess or exhibit Connected Knowing, wherein they take the time to understand the different others, empathize with them, and seek to find some shared values or common ground, tend to be more accepting of the differences they see or perceive in people who are not like them. Those exhibiting Separate Knowing, proceed from a purely informational validity, objectivity, and reasoning approach, regardless of who the others are, but in a way more connected to the argument and information than the individual they are receiving the information or knowledge from.

*Affect Dimensions vs. TAEC Dimensions*

The next procedure was to run multiple regressions on the Affect dimensions (five) with the TAEC dimensions as outcome variables. Figure 4 illustrates the path diagram.
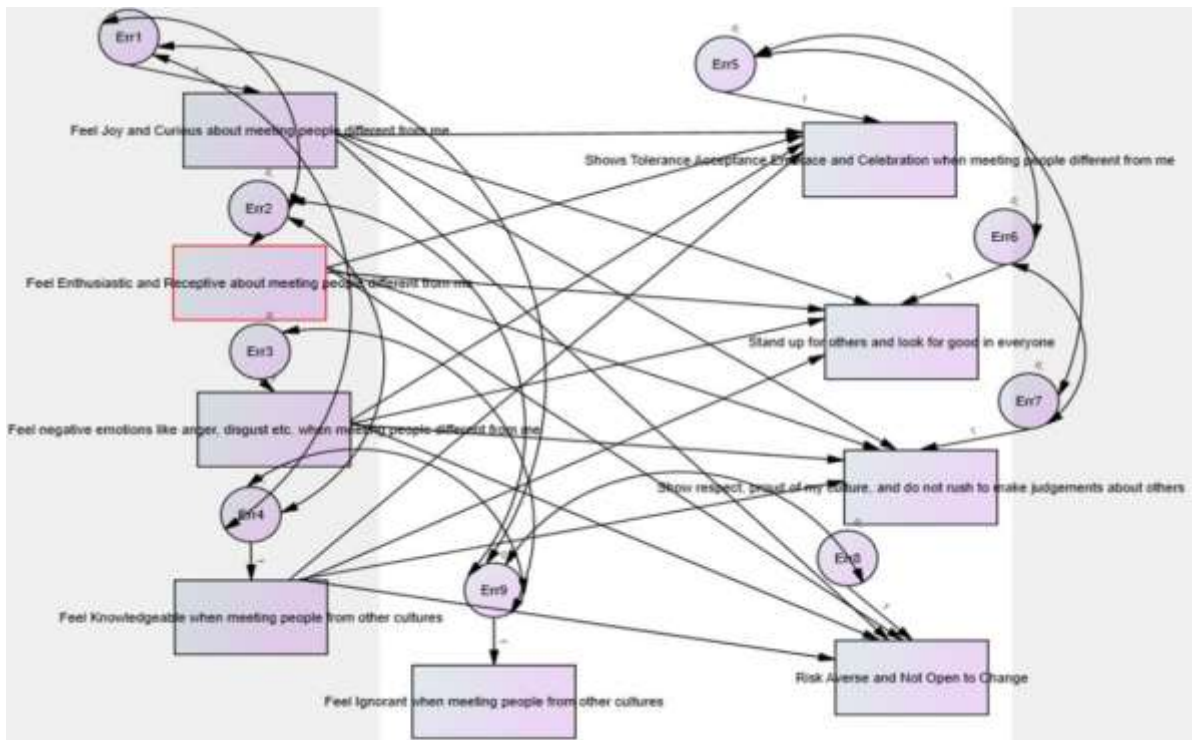
**Figure 4: Negative and Positive Affect vs TAEC Items**

Upon running the procedure, I achieved a minimum Chi Square value of 25.402 (df =9), with p = 0.003. The fit indices NFI (0.905), IFI (0.936), and CFI (0.926), all above the acceptable level of 0.9, again indicated a good model fit. Table 5 illustrates the Critical Rations and their significance levels.

| | | | Estimate | S.E. | C.R. | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TAEC | <--- | Joy_Curious | .550 | .047 | 11.618 | *** |
| Stand_Up_Look_For_Good | <--- | Joy_Curious | .307 | .068 | 4.518 | *** |
| Respect_Proud_of_Culture | <--- | Joy_Curious | .040 | .070 | .579 | .563 |
| Risk_Change_Averse | <--- | Joy_Curious | -.106 | .066 | -1.594 | .111 |
| TAEC | <--- | Enthu_Open | -.065 | .048 | -1.374 | .169 |
| Stand_Up_Look_For_Good | <--- | Enthu_Open | .094 | .068 | 1.374 | .170 |
| Respect_Proud_of_Culture | <--- | Enthu_Open | .206 | .070 | 2.949 | .003 |
| Risk_Change_Averse | <--- | Enthu_Open | -.334 | .067 | -5.021 | *** |
| TAEC | <--- | Neg_Emotion | -.493 | .047 | -10.407 | *** |
| Stand_Up_Look_For_Good | <--- | Neg_Emotion | .012 | .068 | .177 | .859 |
| Respect_Proud_of_Culture | <--- | Neg_Emotion | .020 | .070 | .280 | .780 |
| Risk_Change_Averse | <--- | Neg_Emotion | .107 | .066 | 1.614 | .107 |
| TAEC | <--- | Knowledgeable | -.121 | .048 | -2.549 | .011 |
| Stand_Up_Look_For_Good | <--- | Knowledgeable | .106 | .068 | 1.546 | .122 |
| Respect_Proud_of_Culture | <--- | Knowledgeable | .162 | .070 | 2.321 | .020 |
| Risk_Change_Averse | <--- | Knowledgeable | -.156 | .067 | -2.339 | .019 |

**Table 5: Critical Ratios – Negative and Positive Affect vs TAEC Items**

I immediately note that Joy_Curious is statistically significant with the TAEC dimension (CR = 11.618; p < 0.001) and Stand_Up_Look_For_Good (CR = 4.518; p < 0.001), but not statistically significant with Respect_Proud_Of_Culture. Enthu_Open is however statistically significant with Respect_Proud_Of_Culture (CR = 2.949; p = 0.003) and negatively significant with Risk_Change_Averse (CR = -5.021; p < 0.001). The negative emotions Neg_Emotions dimension

is also negatively significant with the TAEC dimension (CR = -10.407; p < 0.001), and this comes as no surprise. However, what is surprising is that Knowledgeable is negatively associated with the TAEC dimension (CR = -2.549; p = 0.11). Knowledgeable is significant with Respect_Proud_Of_Culture (CR = 2.321; p = 0.020) and rightly with Risk_Change_Averse (CR = -2.339; p = 0.019).

Emotions are an interesting and important aspect of being human, and when one is unable to resolve one's emotions when faced with things, people, or events that bring people out of their comfort zone, then the fallout can manifest itself in various ways. The negative emotions do tend to translate into counterproductive workplace behaviors like harassment, microaggressions, and even bullying, but more often these are because of the high sense of insecurities or other inadequacies that individuals feel in these situations. To add to their woes, when organizations deploy poorly conceived diversity training programs or even good ones without giving people time to process information cognitively and emotionally, more people will feel excluded and retreat into the dark reaches of the organization. An organization, a microcosm of the society it exists in, reflects the values and lived experiences of its denizens. Again, these insights will allow us to proceed more confidently with the TAEC approach to diversity training.

*TAEC Dimensions vs. Team Dynamics Dimensions*

Now that I have some indication of how the TAEC dimensions have performed, the final AMOS procedure was to run the TAEC dimensions against Team Dynamics' dimensions. At the end of the day, one can claim that things in the organization are working well when its employees work well with one another and collaborate within and across the organization. Figure 5 illustrates the path diagram of the TAEC dimensions vs. the Team Dynamics' dimensions.
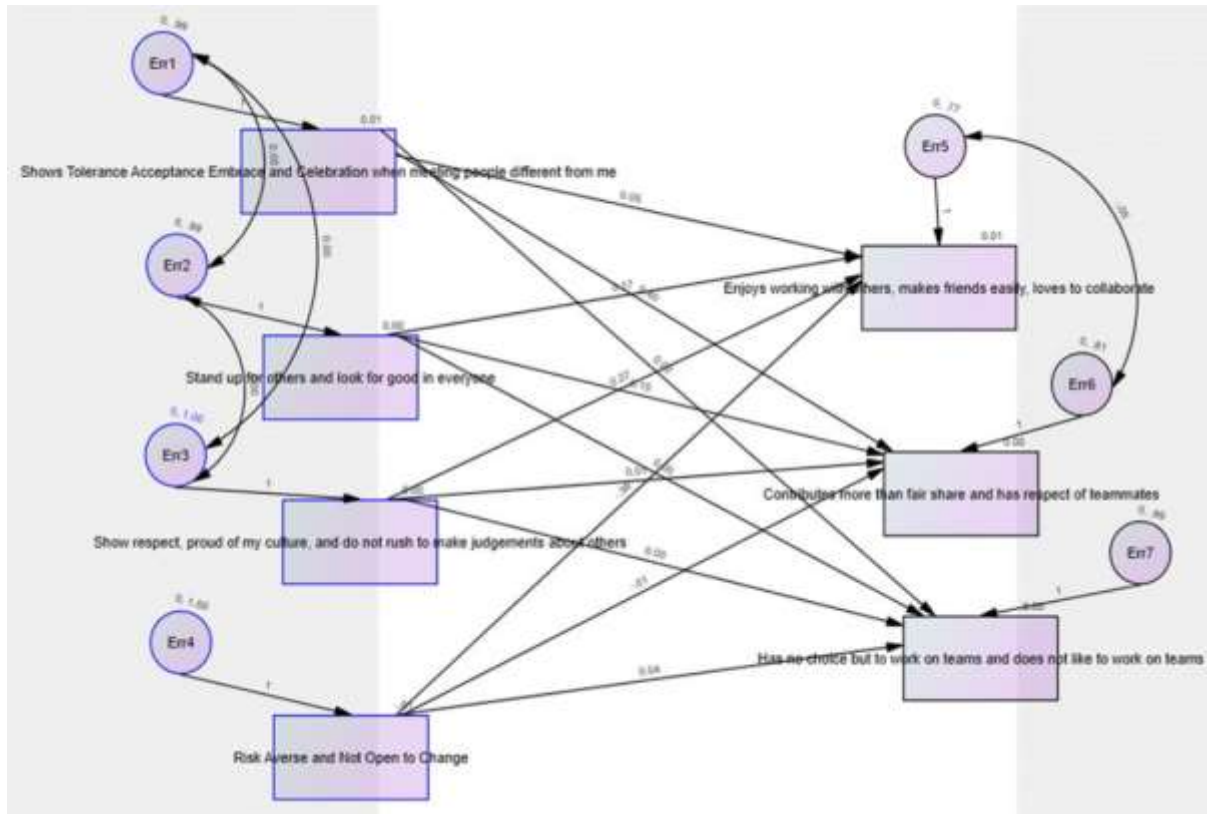
**Figure 5: TAEC Items vs Team Dynamics Items**

Upon running the procedure, a minimum Chi-square value of 0.059 was achieved, p = 1.000. The fit indices NFI (0.999), IFI (1.059), and CFI (1.000) again indicated a very good model fit. Table 6 presents the critical ratios and the significance of the relationship between these dimensions.

| | | | Estimate | S.E. | C.R. | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Enjoy_Teamwork | <--- | TAEC | .047 | .063 | .748 | .454 |
| Contributes_Respect | <--- | TAEC | .397 | .065 | 6.118 | *** |
| Solo_Flyer | <--- | TAEC | .020 | .072 | .280 | .780 |
| Enjoy_Teamwork | <--- | Stand_Up_Look_For_Good | .172 | .063 | 2.721 | .007 |
| Contributes_Respect | <--- | Stand_Up_Look_For_Good | .150 | .065 | 2.309 | .021 |
| Solo_Flyer | <--- | Stand_Up_Look_For_Good | .002 | .072 | .032 | .974 |
| Enjoy_Teamwork | <--- | Respect_Proud_of_Culture | .269 | .063 | 4.254 | *** |
| Contributes_Respect | <--- | Respect_Proud_of_Culture | .010 | .065 | .156 | .876 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Solo_Flyer | <--- | Respect_Proud_of_Culture | -.004 | .072 | -.050 | .960 |
| Enjoy_Teamwork | <--- | Risk_Change_Averse | -.359 | .063 | -5.689 | *** |
| Contributes_Respect | <--- | Risk_Change_Averse | -.010 | .065 | -.148 | .883 |
| Solo_Flyer | <--- | Risk_Change_Averse | .039 | .072 | .545 | .586 |

**Table 6: Critical Ratios – TAEC Items vs. Team Dynamics Items**

The TAEC dimension is statistically significant with Contributes_Respect (CR = 6.118; p < 0.001), while Stand_Up_Look_For_Good is statistically significant with Enjoy_Teamwork (CR = 2.721; p = 0.007) and Contributes_Respect (CR = 2.309; p = 0.021). Respect_Proud_Of_Culture is statistically significant with Enjoy_Teamwork (CR = 4.254; p < 0.001), while Risk_Change_Averse is negatively significant with Enjoy_Teamwork (CR = -5.689; p < 0.001). These results are quite consistent with what I have seen so far with this dataset. While further investigation is necessary with these items in the survey, noting again that the Cronbach Alpha score for the Team Dynamics' items was below the acceptable value of 0.7, I proceed with caution into the next stage of our study, but I am confident that this exploratory phase is taking us in the right direction.

## 4.3 OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

The following quotes are extracted from participants of the TAEC survey, specifically in response to the two open-ended questions (Q49 and Q56) asked in the survey.

### 4.3.1 THOSE WHO STATED THAT THE PANDEMIC DIDN'T AFFECT THEIR ABILITY TO WORK WITH OTHERS DIFFERENT FROM THEM:

"The pandemic did not affect my ability to work well with others because my job has remained an in-person job at all times, rather than being remote. In fact, since Covid started, the diversity amongst my co-workers has increased vastly, in terms of racial diversity, and gender identity, mostly. Over the last three years, my workplace has had a constant surge of new hires who are

quite diverse across many spectra. This has allowed me to interact with people who are different from me".

"The pandemic did not have any impact my ability to work well with others who are from different ethnic and culture backgrounds as long as all those people followed the rules such as wearing masks and distancing when it was required".

"I've always been an introvert and enjoy being alone, so that's why I find it difficult to connect to people sometimes. I don't think the pandemic impacted me at all in this regard, as I experienced the same amount of isolation that I usually do. I still went to work every day and was exposed to a lot of people on my job".

"It didn't. I was so excited to see other people again that working with different people didn't bother me. It didn't really bother me before the pandemic either".

"The Pandemic did not affect my ability to work well with others, no matter their cultural or ethnic background. I continue to work with people in my everyday life and do not judge based on these difference or notice. I work with many people from all over the world and the pandemic did not affect that".

## 4.3.2 THOSE WHO STATED THAT THE PANDEMIC AFFECTED THEIR ABILITY TO WORK WITH OTHERS DIFFERENT FROM THEM:

"The pandemic prevented me from meeting new people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. My work, for instance, became more isolated. Outside of work, the opportunities to meet others became significantly harder. There was much less collaboration, at least in real-world interactions".

"Because of the pandemic, I lost a lot of opportunities to meet with people from different ethnic and culture backgrounds in person. Although I can still work with them by online cooperation, I feel that my ability deteriorated".

"It was more difficult to communicate with those from different backgrounds over text and email as their humor and sarcasm is different, meaning some things are taken the wrong way".
 "I feel that after the pandemic I became less confident and nervous about interacting with others".

"The pandemic completely shut me off from people of other ethnic and cultural backgrounds, so I didn't get a chance to work with them".

### 4.3.3 THOSE WHO MENTIONED THAT THE PANDEMIC AFFECTED THEIR MENTAL HEALTH:

 "Improved it, honestly. although my case is different because the pandemic affected my mental health so much it forced me to get help for my social anxiety-and now I am more open to meeting and working with other people in general".

"The pandemic has impact on the way that my mental health functions, and discrimination in society that I brought the virus into their country. It has decreased the ability to work together significantly".

"I think working during pandemic has brought the team members even closer, we believed in "we are in this together" and have always showed empathy towards each other and making sure that we are respecting each other's space and keeping in mind that mental health is very much getting affected along with physical health being due to pandemic".

### 4.3.4 SOME "NUGGETS" RESPONSE REGARDING DIVERSITY TRAINING:

"I work in a very unique occupation. The work we do requires a rare skillset. So, when we bring someone on, we don't care who or what they are, because it's all about that skillset. This has in essence 'forced' us to get along because we need each other's talents to be successful. So really, we just don't pay much attention to that kind of thing. We do have diversity training but pretty much all of us just roll our eyes because they are preaching to the choir, so to speak".

"None? I know some people are ignorant and rude about difference-but for example, I am a lesbian. I would feel very 'othered' if my coworkers had to watch videos or be trained to not be sexist or homophobic towards me. and i don't think you can train people to be less bigoted. it is making it clear that behavior and attitude is not acceptable that is important".

"You know, that's an incredibly difficult question, and answering your questions here was also difficult. I'm currently self-employed, I don't' HAVE an "organization" other than... me, so I had to mostly just.. neither agree nor disagree. I have, in the past, however, worked for a large retail company. I can't say as they had any diversity training, though we did have an anti-harassment thing we had to do, if you were in certain higher positions, that I had to do a few times. That technically covered not making fun of ethnic and cultural things. But there really wasn't training specific to that. I'm genuinely unsure what the best approach is. I know what DOESN'T work, and that's the incredibly corporate, falsely sincere seminars, training tapes, training courses, etc. Imagine how you acted when as a kid, some assembly happened at school and they had some guys come to talk about how you shouldn't smoke or drink (or whatever it was, that year), and he's trying so hard to be cool to all of you. Remember how you and your friends and literally the entire school made fun of that guy later? Yeah, that's exactly what happens when you train adults with that kind of common delivery. Trust me, we all mock it later. We mocked the heck out of that harassment course. So, what WOULD work? I have no idea. But I know that what companies do to train NOW does NOT work".

"I'm not sure. I think that ensuring all corporations and organizations at least have a diversity training is a good first step. I also think that this training should not only occur during onboarding but should be something that is occurring throughout the entire year. I think the more exposure to diversity and trauma-informed care that occurs in the workplace, the higher the likelihood will be that real chance occurs. I also think, as a realist, that regardless of the existence of abundant resources and diversity trainings, there are just some people who are so stubborn that they will never digest it".

"Instead of watching boring training modules about diversity, which we are required to do once a year, I would prefer interactive live workshops with vibrant presenters who can convey the important issues and give us exercises to do with each other".



**Figure 6: Word Cloud for Open-ended Question 49**

| Code A | Code B | Freq A | Freq B | z | Prob. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Anxiety | Mental health | 7 | 3 | 3.19 | .080 |
| Background | People | 63 | 78 | -1.57 | .069 |
| Connection | No impact | 9 | 124 | -1.93 | .035 |
| Connection | Team | 9 | 8 | 3.09 | .037 |
| Difference | People | 60 | 78 | -1.80 | .041 |
| Diverse | Remote | 13 | 30 | 2.44 | .038 |
| Improved | Nervous | 34 | 4 | 2.09 | .093 |
| Interactions | Nervous | 32 | 4 | 2.53 | .061 |
| Interactions | Remote | 32 | 30 | 2.36 | .030 |
| Mental health | Discrimination | 3 | 2 | 6.81 | .021 |
| No impact | Same | 124 | 13 | 2.35 | .025 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| People | Nervous | 78 | 4 | 1.83 | .098 |
| Remote | Connection | 30 | 9 | 2.12 | .070 |
| Remote | Improved | 30 | 34 | 1.86 | .066 |
| Team | Mental health | 8 | 3 | 3.08 | .085 |

**Table 7: Code Sequences Significant for Open-ended Question 49**

To provide further analysis, every time the word "anxiety" occurred, mental health was also present in the same sentences nearby. That is seven times, the word "anxiety" occurred, and three times, the word "mental health "occurred. The key takeaway message from this code sequence is that whenever the word "mental health" appears, people feel they are being discriminated against. Similarly, whenever the word "diverse" appeared, "remote" came into play. What this coexistence is telling us is that those who had mental health issues and those who were diverse in the open-ended statements said they felt a limited connection with others in the organizations. It is noticeable that a vast number of participants (124 individuals) answered "no impact," and the word "same" appears in the same sentence 13 times. The reason for this result could be that those participants were white individuals from Canada and the US, and they did not feel the pandemic changed their communication. As such, data points out that those who belong to the equity-deserving group felt more lacking connections than those not in the minority groups.

**Figure 7: Word Cloud for Open-ended Question 56**

| Code A | Code B | Freq A | Freq B | z | Prob. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Background | People | 17 | 61 | -1.62 | .077 |
| Background | Workshop | 17 | 12 | 2.57 | .041 |
| Bigot | Case study | 6 | 3 | 3.45 | .070 |
| Bigot | Discrimination | 6 | 3 | 3.45 | .070 |
| Bigot | Engaging | 6 | 8 | 4.14 | .015 |
| Bigot | Rude | 6 | 2 | 4.33 | .047 |
| Case study | Interactions | 3 | 7 | 4.00 | .056 |
| Case study | Lack training | 3 | 9 | 3.48 | .071 |
| Cohension | Equality | 2 | 1 | 11.05 | .008 |
| Cohension | Respect | 2 | 5 | 4.80 | .040 |
| Connection | Lack training | 1 | 9 | 4.37 | .048 |
| Connection | Trainer | 1 | 7 | 5.00 | .037 |
| Difference | In-person | 39 | 9 | 2.14 | .058 |
| Difficult | No use | 5 | 6 | 2.92 | .093 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Difficult | Video | 5 | 5 | 3.25 | .078 |
| Discrimination | Accept | 3 | 8 | 3.72 | .063 |
| Diverse | Bigot | 26 | 6 | 3.87 | .006 |
| Education | Anxiety | 20 | 1 | 3.17 | .080 |
| Education | In-person | 20 | 9 | 2.62 | .039 |
| Education | Mental health | 20 | 1 | 3.17 | .080 |
| Embrace | Continuous | 3 | 2 | 5.94 | .027 |
| Embrace | Video | 3 | 5 | 3.62 | .066 |
| Engaging | Interactions | 8 | 7 | 3.26 | .032 |
| Equality | Understand | 1 | 8 | 4.66 | .043 |
| Ethnicities | Diverse | 11 | 26 | 2.11 | .070 |
| Ethnicities | In-person | 11 | 9 | 2.88 | .044 |
| Food | Remote | 2 | 7 | 5.00 | .037 |
| Group | Team | 9 | 20 | 3.21 | .019 |
| Hiring | No clue | 11 | 26 | 3.99 | .003 |
| Hiring | Workshop | 11 | 12 | 2.21 | .083 |
| Ignorant | Video | 2 | 5 | 5.97 | .027 |
| In-person | Cohension | 9 | 2 | 3.52 | .068 |
| In-person | No clue | 9 | 26 | 2.27 | .058 |
| Interactions | Cohension | 7 | 2 | 4.33 | .047 |
| Interactions | Embrace | 7 | 3 | 3.45 | .070 |
| Lack training | Discrimination | 9 | 3 | 5.42 | .006 |
| Lack training | Leader | 9 | 2 | 3.24 | .078 |
| Leader | Diverse | 2 | 26 | 3.37 | .027 |
| Leader | Interactions | 2 | 7 | 3.40 | .073 |
| Leader | Lack training | 2 | 9 | 2.93 | .094 |
| Mental health | Difficult | 1 | 5 | 5.97 | .027 |
| No clue | Lack training | 26 | 9 | 1.89 | .091 |
| No use | Ignorant | 6 | 2 | 3.69 | .063 |
| No use | Leader | 6 | 2 | 3.69 | .063 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No use | Rude | 6 | 2 | 3.69 | .063 |
| People | Team | 61 | 20 | 1.68 | .083 |
| People | Tolerant | 61 | 4 | 2.21 | .063 |
| Remote | Connection | 7 | 1 | 5.64 | .029 |
| Respect | Team | 5 | 20 | 2.05 | .098 |
| Respect | Workshop | 5 | 12 | 3.00 | .040 |
| Rude | Accept | 2 | 8 | 4.66 | .043 |
| Rude | Video | 2 | 5 | 5.97 | .027 |
| Team | No clue | 20 | 26 | 1.76 | .086 |
| Trainer | Continuous | 7 | 2 | 4.62 | .042 |
| Video | Trainer | 5 | 7 | 4.80 | .009 |
| Workshop | Food | 12 | 2 | 3.12 | .083 |
| Workshop | Lack training | 12 | 9 | 2.62 | .056 |
| Workshop | Mental health | 12 | 1 | 4.61 | .042 |
| Workshop | No clue | 12 | 26 | 1.84 | .097 |

**Table 8: Code Sequences Significant for Open-ended Question 56**

For Table 8, the code sequences examine people's perceptions toward diversity training, and the data indicate that diverse participants felt that others were bigoted. Some people also suggested that whenever there are mental health issues or anxiety, there is a need for education.

Taking responses from both open-ended questions, the results indicate that people who experienced discrimination were those who were in marginal groups, and they did not believe the diversity training their organizations had during the pandemic effectively promoted a sense of inclusion.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Before the pandemic, many organizations already recognised the importance of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) initiatives for organizational success. Although workplace diversity issues have long been investigated, the pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges due to the profound disruption of how people work and live, requiring organizations to be even more intentional in their EDI efforts. In the context of COVID-19, it is time for organizations to reconceptualize their perspective on workplace inclusion, as their previous definition and view of diversity might not be adequate anymore. One potential reason behind this is that many organizations remain in a phase of mere tolerance and tokenism, which prevents them from fully leveraging the benefits of diversity. This is where the TAEC model comes in and plays its role, as it posits that a diverse society must shift progressively through four attitudes, starting from Tolerance to Acceptance and then onto Embracing and Celebrating diversity. With an emphasis on the latter two phases, the model suggests that simply tolerating or accepting implies a lack of recognition of the individual's value in terms of inclusion. Therefore, this model is designed to look at how to develop training programs that try to go further. From the preliminary results, many respondents felt that their organisations' current diversity training programs did not have the desired effect.

According to the TAEC model, individuals with separate knowing may struggle more with managing their emotions, making it more difficult to reconcile relationships with different people. Those who have connected knowing, on the other hand, have a better understanding of their emotions and find it easier to connect with people who are different from them. In general, the TAEC survey focuses on team dynamics. It includes questions that assess the level of homogeneity (i.e., I work with people who look like me) and heterogeneity (i.e., I work well with anyone) within teams. As a result, by collecting data from this survey, it can be seen how many people are identified as having connected knowing and how many are identified as having separate knowing. The analysis of the two open-ended questions suggests a generalized perception of reduced communication within the workplace. However, this experience was not uniformly felt across the board, and it was particularly pronounced among individuals belonging to marginalized communities. These individuals reported substantial challenges establishing social connections in a virtual work environment. Additionally, the data indicates a dichotomy in the remote work

experience during the pandemic, where individuals who had already established social connections pre-pandemic within the workplace appeared to adapt more easily to remote working settings. In contrast, those who recently joined organizations needed help adjusting to the changes.

Regarding limitations, it is important to highlight that there needs to be more definitive research on promoting diversity training efficacy in the post-pandemic era. Therefore, the absence of similar data from other pertinent studies is a major impediment to this article. Additionally, owing to geographical limitations, the study's conclusions will only reflect the participants' perspectives in North American organizations. They should only be seen as having general applicability to other parts of the world. When studying cross-cultural research, intersectionality is also presented, which refers to the understanding that individuals possess overlapping identities (e.g., race, gender, class, sexuality, etc.) and may combine to create different discrimination modes (Healy et al., 2011). Within the context of workplace diversity, the concept of intersectionality means that the combination of various identities can shape employees' experiences in the workplace. For instance, the workplace experience of a Black woman may differ from that of a Black man as a result of the intersecting impacts of racism and sexism. However, I acknowledge that there is a generalization in addressing challenges for all POC without an in-depth comparison between different cultural norms. As the scope of intersectionality is extremely vast, I had to limit it to POC in general for the time consideration of this study.

Nevertheless, future research needs to examine the intricate relationship between intersectionality and workplace diversity to provide a more thorough understanding of the experiences faced by POC employees. Lastly, this study did not investigate the interactions of individuals already engaged in virtual work settings before the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby limiting the ability to compare results across different working conditions. Future research is encouraged to explore this aspect, contributing to a more holistic conclusion.

# CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

It is renowned that Canada has a diverse population, and such a pattern is predicted to continue increasing in the near future. This may result in a diverse working environment as more and more POC immigrants enter the workplace. However, concerns have been raised about whether society can catch up with the speed at which diversity changes. The COVID-19 pandemic encourages new thinking about the challenges that people of colour face in the workplace, emphasizing the importance for organizations to create long-term inclusive cultures that promote harmony and understanding among different cultural groups. The transition from traditional physical settings to virtual workplaces is a significant sight brought about by the pandemic. Therefore, there is an urgent need to introduce new inclusion strategies that can bring meaningful changes to our evolving virtual landscapes. As a result, implementing effective training programs, such as the TAEC model of diversity, may help resolve this gap. Organizations can leverage these strategies with dedicated effort and commitment to gain a competitive advantage and make significant progress towards a more inclusive workplace.

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TAEC Model of Diversity – Survey Questions and Demographic Statistics

| Pandemic | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. During the pandemic, I found it difficult to make connections with people who are different from me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. Because of the pandemic, I do not feel engaged with my coworkers, whether like me or different from me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. The pandemic caused me to feel more ignored, because of who I identify as | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4. Remote work did not help me connect with new coworkers, especially those different from me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5. While my company had diversity training during the pandemic, I feel it was not useful and did not allow my coworkers from getting to know me better | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6. We need to have better diversity training approaches and policies in the organization | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

**Table 1: Six Pandemic-Related Questions from The TAEC Survey**

Q49: Considering your responses above, how much did the pandemic impact your ability to work well with others who are from ethnic and culture backgrounds that are different from yours? -Open Ended

Q56: According to you, what would be the best or most effective approach to diversity training in an organization? - Open Ended

**Demographics**

1. Age – Range
2. Gender – Male – Female – Prefer Not to Say
3. Education – Highest Degree Completed
4. Annual Income – Range
5. Occupation (or home faculty for student participants) – Open Ended
6. Nationality – US Canada Other__
7. Country of Origin if different from Nationality –
8. Country of Residence
9. Population of your city or town of residence
10. Do you identify as Black, indigenous, and/or Person of Color?
11. Are you a visible minority in your community?

| How old are you | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| # | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation | Variance | Count |
| 1 | 18.00 | 69.00 | 35.13 | 11.63 | 135.27 | 200 |

| What are your preferred pronouns? | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| # | Answer | % | Count |
| 1 | She / Her | 44.00% | 88 |
| 2 | He / Him | 51.50% | 103 |
| 3 | They / Them | 2.50% | 5 |
| 4 | Prefer not to say | 2.00% | 4 |

| | Total | 100% | 200 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |

### What is your highest level of education achieved?

| # | Answer | % | Count |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 227 | None | 1.00% | 2 |
| 228 | High School / GED | 27.00% | 54 |
| 229 | Associate's Diploma / Certificate | 14.00% | 28 |
| 230 | Bachelor's Degree | 46.00% | 92 |
| 231 | Graduate Degree (Masters', Ph.D., J.D., M.D. etc) | 12.00% | 24 |
| | Total | 100% | 200 |

### What is your annual income?

| # | Answer | % | Count |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 206 | Less than $20,000 | 24.50% | 49 |
| 207 | $20,000 - $50,000 | 26.00% | 52 |
| 208 | $50,000 - $100,000 | 31.50% | 63 |
| 209 | $100,000 - $150,000 | 12.00% | 24 |

| 210 | More than $150,000 | 6.00% | 12 |

| | Total | 100% | 200 |

| What is your nationality? | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| # | Answer | % | Count |
| 1 | American | 37.31% | 75 |
| 2 | Canadian | 53.23% | 107 |
| 4 | Other | 9.45% | 19 |
| | Total | 100% | 201 |

| What is the population of your city or town of residence? | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| # | Answer | % | Count |
| 96 | Less than 10,000 | 10.95% | 22 |
| 97 | 10,000 - 50,000 | 15.92% | 32 |
| 98 | 50,000 - 100,000 | 10.95% | 22 |
| 99 | 100,000 - 150,000 | 10.45% | 21 |
| 100 | More than 150,000 | 51.74% | 104 |
| | Total | 100% | 201 |

| Do you identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or Person of Colour? | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **#** | **Answer** | **%** | **Count** |
| 4 | Yes | 31.66% | 63 |
| 5 | No | 68.34% | 136 |
| | Total | 100% | 199 |
| Are you a visible minority in your community? | | | |
| **#** | **Answer** | **%** | **Count** |
| 1 | Yes | 30.35% | 61 |
| 2 | No | 69.65% | 140 |
| | Total | 100% | 201 |

**Table 9: Demographic Information of Participants.**

| Survey Item | Scale | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Affect or Emotion Items (adapted from Sundararajan, Sundararajan, & Manderson, 2016) | | | | | | | |
| 1. I feel nervous when meeting new people | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. I feel angry when meeting new people | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. I feel disgusted when meeting new people | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4. I feel nervous when I see people from other cultures, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and those not like me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5. I feel angry when I see people from other cultures, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and those not like me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6. I feel disgusted when I see people from other cultures, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and those not like me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7. I feel joy when meeting new people | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8. I feel compassionate when meeting new people | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 9. I feel enthusiastic when meeting new people | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10. I feel joy when I see people from other cultures, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and those not like me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 11. I feel compassionate when I see people from other cultures, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and those not like me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 12. I feel enthusiastic when I see people from other cultures, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and those not like me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 13. I feel curious when meeting new people | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 14. I feel ignorant when meeting new people | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 15. I feel knowledgeable when meeting new people | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 16. I feel curious when I see people from other cultures, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and those not like me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 17. I feel ignorant when I see people from other cultures, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and those not like me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 18. I feel knowledgeable when I see people from other cultures, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and those not like me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 19. I look forward to meeting new people | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 20. I am always open to meeting new people | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 21. I enjoy getting to know new people | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 22. I look forward to meeting people from other cultures, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and those not like me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 23. I am always open to meeting people from other cultures, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and those not like me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 24. I enjoy getting to know people from other cultures, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and those not like me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| TAEC Items (New for this study) | | | | | | | |
| 25. I show tolerance or acceptance to others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 26. I show respect to adults. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 27. I accept people from different cultures or countries. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 28. I show concern for someone who is put down or made fun of. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 29. I stand up for someone who is put down or made fun of. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 30. I try hard to not make a comment or joke about another person who looks or acts differently. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 31. I am proud of my own culture, language or country where my parents were born. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 32. I accept people's differences (no matter how old they are, if they are male, female, or other, if they have special needs, or look different). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 33. I look for the good things about a person, not where they are different. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 34. I do not make judgments about others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 35. My attitude towards risk is very conservative | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 36. I am not open to change | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Team Dynamics Items (Sundararajan, 2007)_ | | | | | | | |
| 37. I enjoy working with others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 38. I look forward to working with others and on teams | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 39. I prefer to work by myself | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 40. I must work on teams, so I have no choice but to get along | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 41. I don't like to work on teams, because I must be accountable to others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 42. I contribute my fair share at work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 43. I contribute more than my fair share at work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 44. I have the respect of my co-workers and team members | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 45. I have influence over decisions in my team | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 46. I make friends easily | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 47. I look forward to collaborating with others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

**Table 10: The Original TAEC Survey Items**