Metaverse for Workplace Diversity – A Socio-Technical and Motivational Perspective

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Abstract

The hybrid workplace has amplified organizational diversity by bringing together individuals across geographies, cultures, and abilities. Yet this diversity often remains latent—constrained by visibility hierarchies, accessibility gaps, and biases in participation. The Metaverse, through its immersive, embodied, and persistent affordances, offers a unique opportunity to bridge these divides by reimagining representation, equity, and access in hybrid work. This study introduces a Metaverse-Enabled Diversity Framework (MEDF) grounded in Embodied Social Presence and Self-Determination Theory. The framework posits that metaverse affordances—such as avatar embodiment, spatial co-presence, multimodal communication, and adaptive accessibility—cultivate Embodied Social Presence (ESP), wherein participants experience a heightened sense of being with others and acting through avatars in shared virtual spaces. Such embodied co-presence enables authentic self-expression, interpersonal trust, and agency, thereby transforming technical affordances into meaningful social connection. Through this layer of ESP, employees' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (as proposed in SDT) are more effectively satisfied, leading to equitable participation and broader representation of diverse identities. Methodologically, the study adopts a three-phase approach: (i) Virtual ethnography within prototype metaverse workspaces to observe identity expression and accessibility behaviors; (ii) Experimental participation sessions testing design features that influence representation and interaction equity; and (iii) Post-session interviews to explore participants' sense of fairness and authenticity. By integrating socio-technical (metaverse affordances and workplace systems), relational (Embodied Social Presence), and motivational (SDT) perspectives, this research extends theoretical understanding of digital diversity enablement and provides actionable insights for organizations seeking to operationalize equitable and accessible hybrid workplaces through the Metaverse.

Keywords
Metaverse, Hybrid Workplace Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, DEI, Virtual World, Virtual Reality

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