Behavioural Equality: Justification for a New Field of Research

# Abstract (250)

This paper introduces "Behavioural Equality" as an imperative new field of research, aiming to transcend traditional paradigms of Diversity Management (DM), Equal Opportunities (EO), and Affirmative Action (AA) within organisational contexts. Unlike conventional models that primarily focus on demographic diversity as a metric for organisational performance, Behavioural Equality seeks to understand the complex interplay of behavioural patterns and organisational dynamics that underpin inequality. Drawing from interdisciplinary insights in behavioural economics, psychology, sociology, and organisational studies, Behavioural Equality emphasises examining in-group and out-group dynamics, power structures, and individuals' emotional and psychological responses to equality and diversity initiatives. This paper argues for a pragmatic methodological approach to address the intricate nature of human behaviour in organisational settings, challenging the traditional reliance on demographic diversity as the main indicator of organisational health. By positioning diversity and equality as outcomes of equitable practices rather than mere objectives, Behavioural Equality promises to provide actionable insights for developing more inclusive, fair, and effective organisational strategies. This new field aims to bridge the gap between academic research and practical application, fostering a deeper understanding of the behavioural dimensions of equality and catalysing meaningful societal and organisational change.

# 2.0 Introduction: (600)

In the evolving landscape of organisational Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), traditional models such as Diversity Management (DM), Equal Opportunities (EO), and Affirmative Action (AA) have been pivotal in promoting workplace diversity. However, their effectiveness in addressing deep-rooted behavioural and structural dynamics perpetuating inequality has been limited. The advent of Diversity Management in the 1990s, with its focus on leveraging diversity for business gains, marked a significant shift from EO and AA's legalistic and moral frameworks. Despite its intentions, DM has faced criticism for its utilitarian approach, often overlooking the intricate human behaviours and power dynamics that influence organisational culture and employee relations.

Critical Diversity Studies (CDS) emerged as a response, challenging DM's business-centric perspective and advocating for a more comprehensive understanding of diversity, including power relations, social justice, and structural inequality. However, both DM and CDS have struggled to fully encapsulate the complexity of organisational behaviour and individuals' nuanced responses to diversity initiatives.

This paper proposes the establishment of "Behavioural Equality" as a new field of research, distinct from but complementary to DM and CDS. Behavioural Equality is premised on integrating behavioural sciences into studying EDI within organisations. It aims to uncover the underlying behavioural patterns and systemic deviations that contribute to inequality, moving beyond the surface-level metrics of demographic diversity. By adopting a pragmatic approach and employing specialised research methodologies, Behavioural Equality seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how individual and collective behaviours impact the achievement of equality in the workplace.

Behavioural Equality differentiates itself by focusing on the root causes of inequality, emphasising behavioural insights over demographic diversity, and recognising diversity and equality as outcomes of fair and inclusive organisational practices. This new field aims to bridge the gap between theoretical research and practical application, offering a novel perspective that could inform more effective EDI strategies and contribute to creating more equitable organisational environments.

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# 3.0 Literature Review

Diversity Management (DM) has been the dominant discourse for inequality practice in the workplace since the 1990s (Nkomo *et al.*, 2019) when it acted as a replacement for Equal Opportunities (EO) and Affirmative Action (AA) (Kelly and Dobbin, 1998). Diversity management positioned itself as distinct from EO and AA (Table 1) primarily due to DMs' focus on the business case, which arose due to a relaxation of equality legislation (Bagilhole, 2009). Additionally, distance from EO was sought due to criticism toward EO and AA for indoctrinating diverse groups into the status quo (Prasad and Mills, 1997), focusing on group difference at the expense of individual skills (Liff, 1997) and presenting a perceived threat to the idea of meritocracy resulting in backlash (Plant and Devine, 2001).

Table 1 EO vs DM adapted from Bagilhole 2009

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Equal Opportunities** | **Diversity Management** |
| **Pressure to implement** | Externally initiated | Internally driven |
| **Source** | Legally imposed | Business needs-driven |
| **Aim** | Quantitative – improve numbers | Qualitative – Improve environment |
| **Focus** | Problem-focused | Opportunity focused |
| **Assumption** | Assimilation | Pluralism |
| **State** | Reactive | Proactive |
| **Scope** | Race, gender, disability | All differences |
| **Content** | Discrimination and justice | Differences as an asset |
| **Level** | Out-groups | Individual |

These macro and micro sociopolitical contexts heavily influenced EDI as a research area, leading to an initial focus on difference and discrimination in the 1960s and 1970s in line with equal opportunities and affirmative action. The next two decades saw the focus turn to the business case characterised by Diversity Management (DM) studies and the necessary response of Critical Diversity Studies (CDS). Then, 2000 and 2010 saw a shift away from the business case and toward implicit bias and diversity climate research, both of which remain predominantly viewed through DM and CDS perspectives (Nkomo *et al.*, 2019; McCarthy, 2021). Since 2019, research has incorporated ideas such as structural inequality, whiteness, radicalisation, and intersection. However, DM has struggled to incorporate these ideas within its utilitarian ontology, suggesting a paradigm shift in how we approach EDI research in the context of the organisational environment is required.

## 3.1 Diversity Management

Diversity Management's purpose has been defined as "to enhance the performance of a heterogeneous workforce and inclusive development of people with differences in gender, ethnicity,

nationality, cultural and educational backgrounds" (Yadav and Lenka, 2020, p. 1). DMs central belief is that there is an economic or business benefit to valuing individuals in the workplace and avoiding practices that create inequality based on characteristics (Ivancevich and Gilbert, 2000).

As a newer field of study, the definitions of diversity have evolved, resulting in two main approaches, micro and macro (Ragins and Gonzales, 2003). Micro focuses on individual and group perspectives, while macro focuses on organisational and power perspectives. Marco-level research has primarily positioned itself within a resource-based and competitive advantage theoretical lens; there is significantly less research taking a sociological or political perspective (Syed and Tariq, 2017). Additionally, there is a deficit of work considering the intersection of macro, meso and micro levels (Joshi and Neely, 2018), meaning challenges like the policy-practice gap can be overlooked (McCarthy *et al.*, 2021).

Empirical evidence from DM is mixed. Individual studies have demonstrated positive relationships between diversity and desired organisational attributes (Weber, Sadri and Gentry, 2018). In a study of 83 teams in eight organisations, age and educational diversity were positively related to team performance(Kearney, Gebert and Voelpel, 2017). There was also evidence gained from four large firms in a research consortium that engaging with managers through initiatives such as diversity task forces led to increased diversity in management roles (Kochan *et al.*, 2003). However, meta-analysis has consistently mixed results demonstrating positive and negative correlations between diversity and organisational performance-related activity in their meta-analysis of 108 empirical studies. Stahl *et al.* (2010) found that diversity led to losses due to increased conflict and social integration; however, there were gains in creativity and satisfaction. In a meta-analysis of thirty studies regarding diversity climate over two decades, Mor Barak *et al.* (2016) found positive and detrimental outcomes for diversity management initiatives; in contrast, inclusion-focused approaches are consistently linked with positive results. A further study of 25 years of diversity climate research in 94 studies found that inclusion climates had a stronger relationship with outcomes than diversity climates.

These studies suggest that diversity in and of itself does not contribute to improved organisational performance (Knights and Omanović, 2016). It is therefore suggested that diversity is an outcome of collective, inclusive and equal workplaces, not the creator of such environment. It is argued that the positioning of diversity as the focus of work around equality automatically sets research on the wrong path as it ultimately tries to demonstrate a business case for diversity as an isolated action rather than an outcome that is predetermined by other factors.

## 3.2 Critique of Diversity Management

The field of Critical Diversity Studies (CDS) arose in the 1990s, criticising the shift from Equal opportunities to Diversity Management (DM), arguing that the DM approach is poorly defined and ambiguous (Köllen, 2019) and failed to appreciate inequality due to its taking a static and utilitarian approach (Zanoni *et al.*, 2010; Leslie, 2019). CDS provided a counter to DM challenging the business case perspective for detracting from inequality (Linnehan and Konrad, 1999; Zanoni and Janssens, 2004; M. Noon, 2007), arguing that the "everyone is diverse" rhetoric ignores the impact of power relations (Linnehan and Konrad, 1999) and the predetermined evaluation of diversity management in practice (Prasad, Prasad and Mir, 2011). As the field of CDS developed, it outlined fundamental critiques against DM literature (Zanoni *et al.*, 2010).

Firstly, DM takes a positivistic position regarding the ontology of identity that presents individuals as clear-cut and measurable, failing to account for socially constructed factors and undermining the significance of ethnicity and intersection (M. Noon, 2007; Crenshaw, 2019). The focus is primarily on the difference in a specific and narrow context, focusing this through a lens of out-group experience. DM has largely failed to appreciate and incorporate historical and structural power inequalities (Reskin, 2012; Cheryan and Rose Markus, 2020), overlooking the importance of equality (M. Noon, 2007) and structural inequality (DiTomaso, Post and Parks-Yancy, 2007; DiTomaso, 2021) in favour of the experience and outcomes of diverse groups (Post *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, by focusing on out-group characteristics, DM rarely considers the phenomenon and impact of in-group love (Halevy, Weisel and Bornstein, 2012) and the importance of understanding and dismantling the advantage given to in-groups within organisations.

Secondly, the utilitarian approach underlying DM presents significant challenges. It overlooks systemic inequalities (Linnehan and Konrad, 1999; Zanoni and Janssens, 2004; M. Noon, 2007) and reinforces benevolent inequality (Glick and Fiske, 1996; Romani, Holck and Risberg, 2019). One of the critical oversights of this approach is its failure to rigorously evaluate diversity initiatives, predicated on the assumption that such endeavours inherently lead to beneficial outcomes (Mannix and Neale, 2005; Jonsen, Maznevski and Schneider, 2011). This conceptual tension is encapsulated in the ongoing debate juxtaposing the inherent value of diversity against the complexities of discrimination, which can be both subtle and overt (Robinson and Dechant, 1997). DM champions the unequivocal value of diversity within organisational contexts (Zanoni *et al.*, 2010); however, this view is challenged by empirical evidence suggesting that the impact of diversity is multifaceted, acting as a 'double-edged sword' that can both enrich and complicate organisational dynamics demonstrating both positive effects of diversity and the unintended consequences that can perpetuate or even exacerbate existing inequalities and discriminatory practices. (Kalev. *et al.*, 2006; Kaiser *et al.*, 2013; Leslie, 2019).

Finally, CDS argues that improvement in EDI practice is context-sensitive and can only be understood through an organisational lens, considering internal and external factors (Prasad et al., 2011). While the impact of historic external factors on some out-groups is often integrated into diversity approaches, little attention is given to current political, economic, social, and technological environments or specific organisational and managerial contexts (Knights and Omanović, 2016), meaning that approaches are built on historic and universal, as opposed to context-driven foundations.

## 3.3 **Advocating a Paradigm Shift in Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Research**

Over the last two decades, a growing chorus of voices from the field of EDI scholarship has advocated for a fundamental shift in the approach to studying EDI within organisations (Leslie, Mayer and Kravitz, no date; Ivancevich and Gilbert, 2000; Ashkanasy, Härtel and Daus, 2002; Mike Noon, 2007; Jonsen, Maznevski and Schneider, 2011; Pullen, A., Vachhani, S., Gagnon, S. and Cornelius, 2017; Joshi and Neely, 2018; Nkomo *et al.*, 2019; Yadav and Lenka, 2020). This call for change is multifaceted, seeking greater collaboration between scholars and practitioners (Ivancevich and Gilbert, 2000; Pullen, A., Vachhani, S., Gagnon, S. and Cornelius, 2017), a deeper appreciation for cultural and linguistic diversity (Jonsen, Maznevski and Schneider, 2011), and increased understanding of how emotions shape management thought and practice (Ashkanasy, Härtel and Daus, 2002).

The existing diversity literature is polarised between proving and disproving the business case for diversity, often at the expense of addressing more pressing concerns such as structural inequality and the nuances of inclusion. The prevailing focus on individual-level outcomes has led to a neglect of systemic factors and the broader socio-political forces within organisations (Nkomo et al., 2019), further complicated by the positioning of the term diversity, which creates tension with ideas around equality (Jindra, 2014).

A critical examination of diversity management reveals its limitations, particularly its tendency to promote uniform practices across diverse organisational landscapes, thus overlooking the unique contextual factors that influence EDI dynamics (Syed and Kramar, 2009). This critique is supported by empirical research that advocates for a contextually rich, intersectional approach to studying EDI, which acknowledges the multifaceted identities of subjects and researchers alike (Roberson, Ryan, and Ragins, 2017). Although DM has provided insight into the what and the who, there is a gap regarding the when and the why.

Research in both DMs has strayed from the utilitarian and static ontology, providing much-needed insight (Kossek and Zonia, 1993; Hicks-Clarke and Iles, 2000; Mor Barak, 2000; Holmes *et al.*, 2020). However, DM is still bound by the overarching ontological positioning, meaning the presumptions of the overall concept can undermine papers focused on structural equality and macro levels.

This discourse suggests a pivotal moment in the field that necessitates a departure from the traditional DM framework towards an approach that prioritises behavioural equality. Such an approach would recognise the inherent value of diverse perspectives and critically assess the structural and systemic challenges that impede inclusivity. By shifting the focus from identity to behaviour and grounding research in the complex realities of organisational and external contexts, this new paradigm aims to foster a more inclusive, equitable, and just organisational culture.

In light of these considerations, it is proposed that the field of EDI research evolves to embrace a new, comprehensive framework that integrates the lessons learned from past DM efforts while addressing the limitations identified. This proposed approach emphasises the importance of understanding the unintended consequences of EDI initiatives, the need for context-sensitive research methodologies, and the prioritisation of structural and behavioural changes over superficial diversity metrics. Doing so aims to contribute to developing more effective, sustainable, and equitable organisational practices.

## 3.4 Introducing Behavioural Science

Behavioural Science is an interdisciplinary field encompassing elements of sociology, psychology and anthropology. The goals of behavioural science have been outlined as the description, understanding, prediction and control of behaviour, which are applied through "three interconnected aspects, research that generates knowledge, theory that organises knowledge and application that puts knowledge to use" (Whitley, Kite and Adams, 2012, p. 4). Its recognition as a tool for addressing global challenges was rooted in behavioural economics. Schimmelpfennig and Muthukrishna (2022) refer to the second wave of behavioural science in public policy where behavioural economists (Simon, 1957; Kahneman and Tversky, 1979; Tversky and Kahneman, 2019) challenged neoclassical theory, resulting in the uptake of behavioural science, specifically Nudge theory (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008) as a public policy intervention. Increasingly, public policy has applied behavioural economics within behavioural science to change the behaviours of targeted individuals for their own "benefit" (Oliver, 2019). The behavioural approach has been increasingly adopted globally (Ball and Feitsma, 2020), with over 150 public entities dedicated to it (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2015). The field of policy has moved on from a focus on behavioural "nudges" (Hausman, D.M. and Welch, 2010) to developing an understanding of how behavioural science can be embedded into activities such as strategy, operations and regulation using behavioural science as a lens to view public issues as a way to break patterns (Hallsworth, 2023).

Since the advent of Behavioural economics, behavioural science has been successfully applied to other fields (Just, 2014), including health (Hart, Byrne-Davis, Maltinsky and Bull, 2023) policy (Hallsworth, 2023), digital behaviour and sustainable development (Schimmelpfennig and Muthukrishna, 2022) demonstrating that it is applicable and transferable as a lens to bring fresh understanding to stalled disciplines.

However, it is not without criticism. The field of behavioural science has received criticism for lacking heterogeneous consideration (Bryan, Tipton and Yeager, 2021), also known as the WEIRD problem, where the majority of research into behavioural science is undertaken on Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich and Democratic (WEIRD) societies even though these societies are in the global minority. There is also considered to be a replication crisis through a lack of a cumulative framework (Fleetwood, 2005; Muthukrishna and Henrich, 2019; Ball and Feitsma, 2020; Hastings, Michie and Johnston, 2020). These criticisms are valid and should be considered when developing a behavioural approach to EDI study.

Schimmelpfennig and Muthukrishna, (2022) argue for a cultural evolution of behavioural science to derive insights into other fields, such as equality and diversity. It could be argued that DM and EO have fallen into the same patterns as economics before them. Assuming people will make rational decisions and perform expected behaviours when encountering and responding to EDI work. CDS have demonstrated that the human response to EDI is far more complicated (Kalev. *et al.*, 2006; Kaiser *et al.*, 2013; Leslie, 2019). Applying Behavioural Science to EDI could produce an approach that can methodologically describe, understand, predict and influence behaviour in response to unequal workplaces and the outcomes of approaches and initiatives to address these inequalities.

We, therefore, suggest establishing Behavioural Equality as a research field to seek to explain common and systemic deviations from the behaviour implied by DM and EO.

## 3.5 Positioning BE as a new approach to understanding EDI

Behavioural Equality should be recognised as an interdisciplinary domain that draws upon insights from behavioural economics, psychology, sociology, and organisational studies. Its goal is to dissect and address systemic behavioural deviations contributing to organisational inequality. Contrary to traditional models that often highlight demographic diversity as an asset or focus on compliance with legal standards, Behavioural Equality endeavours to unravel the underlying behavioural patterns and organisational dynamics that impede or facilitate equality.

**Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

The field should encompass:

* Systematic analysis of in-group and out-group dynamics, examining how these social structures influence organisational behaviour and attitudes towards equality and diversity.
* Investigation into the role of power dynamics and organisational justice in shaping responses to equality initiatives.
* Development and application of specialised research methodologies that account for the complex interplay between individual behaviours and organisational structures.

Conversely, Behavioural Equality should not:

* Solely focus on demographic or surface-level diversity metrics without considering the behavioural and structural factors that influence these metrics.
* Neglect the emotional and psychological aspects of organisational members' responses to diversity and equality initiatives.

**Purpose and Objectives**

The primary purpose of Behavioural Equality is to provide a nuanced understanding of how behaviours, both at the individual and collective levels, impact the achievement of equality within organisations. Its objectives encompass:

* Identifying behavioural patterns that perpetuate inequality and devising strategies to mitigate them.
* Enhancing the effectiveness of equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) initiatives by aligning them with a deeper understanding of human behaviour and organisational dynamics.
* Promoting a shift from viewing diversity as a goal to be achieved through initiatives to understanding it as an outcome of fair and inclusive practices.

**Differentials and Function**

Behavioural Equality differentiates itself from existing models (see Table 1) by:

* Emphasising the need for a behaviourally informed approach that goes beyond demographic diversity to understand the root causes of inequality.
* Recognising that diversity and equality are outcomes of organisational culture and practices, not just goals to be achieved through isolated initiatives.
* Focusing on the organisational and structural levels rather than solely on individual or group-level interventions.

In terms of function, Behavioural Equality aims to:

* Serve as a guiding framework for developing more effective EDI strategies grounded in a comprehensive understanding of organisational behaviour.
* Inform policy-making and corporate strategy by offering insights into how behavioural biases and structural factors can be addressed to foster more inclusive workplaces.
* Contribute to social change by providing a basis for interventions that encourage more inclusive behaviour within and beyond organisational settings.

# 4.0 Potential Methodologies: (750)

Although there has been a range of ontological approaches to DM, there is a preference for either positivist or radical, critical or transformative ontologies. Research taking a Positivist position has tended to concentrate on categories of difference and the impact on or of these categories. There has also been a separate vein of research that aims to understand these experiences in greater depth, adopting radical, critical or transformative ontologies (Pringle and Booysen, 2018). However, both approaches have been criticised for their lack of focus on sociological factors, such as power and systems (Prasad and Mills, 1997; Nkomo *et al.*, 2019) or exogenous and meta impacts (Syed and Kramar, 2009). Micro-level theorising has been useful. However, it limits knowledge by omitting a wider view of structural inequality and mega and macro thinking (Joshi and Neely, 2018).

Behavioural Science is a well-established field with an acknowledged lack of a cumulative framework (Fleetwood, 2005; Ball and Feitsma, 2020; Hastings, Michie and Johnston, 2020). However, it is argued that in a field as complex and multi-disciplined as behavioural science, multiple ontologies and epistemologies are necessary and that it is the culmination of epistemological positions and their corresponding empirical data to the theory that provides a robust way of understanding the world (Michie *et al.*, 2023). It is suggested that consistent statements of theoretical positioning can overcome the lack of a clear framework.

When considering the foundations of Behavioural Equality, a compelling solution to the challenges of mixed ontologies adopted within Behavioural science and the potentially overly focused critical ontologies of DM and CDS is presented by pragmatism. First introduced in 1878 by Pierce (Barnes, 1952), it assumes that every problem is practical and, therefore, cannot be understood as an abstract idea (Islam, 2022). Pragmatism sees human action as connected to the environment it is performed within, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of human behaviour. From a methodological perspective, it can be understood as "the use of whatever philosophical and/or methodological approach works for the particular research problem under study" (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998, p. 5). Other disciplines within the behavioural research sphere that have made the case for a pragmatic approach include behavioural economics (Hoover, 2013; Kolodko, 2014; Garcés, 2022) and behavioural science (Hayes, Barnes-Holmes and Wilson, 2012; Kaplan, 2017).

Critics of pragmatism have questioned if it is a philosophical idea or a mix of methodologies (Denzin, 2007). In response, Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) argue that the philosophical basis of pragmatism is not the search for an external truth but rather a continual and contextual search for "what works"—viewing the search for external "truths" as a distraction to pragmatisms philosophical purpose. This philosophical approach fits the discussion in Behavioural research that argues that human behaviour has failed to be explained by any singular external truth (Ajzen, 2005; Fishbein and Ajzen, 2005), but understanding has been gained by analysis of specific contexts (Michie *et al.*, 2023).

A notable criticism of pragmatism centres on its use of diverse methods. Critics argue that employing multiple methods makes it difficult for researchers to master various knowledge areas, potentially compromising the quality of their results (Denzin, 2007). This concern is valid but must be understood in the right context. Classic ontologies, which posit an external truth and prescribe specific methodological designs, might simplify pattern recognition for researchers. However, this simplicity can be deceptive. If the context is misinterpreted, it can lead to errors, particularly in erroneously assuming causal relationships.

Human behaviour is inherently complex, which demands a philosophical approach that acknowledges and embraces it rather than oversimplifying it for convenience. It is essential to acknowledge the risks inherent in research. We should integrate other tools, such as diverse theoretical frameworks, to address the field's challenges effectively. This approach is preferable to narrow our focus solely on ontological selection, which might neglect the multifaceted nature of the issues we study.

# 5.0 Potential Impact

The advent of Behavioural Equality as a new field of research heralds transformative possibilities for academia and society. By synergising insights from behavioural sciences with the imperatives of equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), this interdisciplinary domain stands poised to engender far-reaching implications across various sectors. These include:

**Reconceptualising EDI Frameworks**

At the heart of Behavioural Equality lies the potential to fundamentally reconceptualise traditional EDI frameworks within organisations. This field encourages a more nuanced understanding of EDI by shifting the focus from demographic metrics to underlying behavioural patterns and organisational dynamics. Such a perspective recognises diversity not merely as a target or metric but as a natural outcome of equitable and inclusive practices. Consequently, organisations can move beyond tokenistic diversity initiatives to implement strategies that genuinely foster an inclusive culture, thereby enhancing organisational resilience, creativity, and performance.

**Enhancing Policy and Strategy Formulation**

Behavioural Equality aims to enrich policy and strategy formulation by providing deeper insights into the behavioural underpinnings of inequality. Policymakers and strategists can leverage these insights to design interventions that effectively address unconscious biases, systemic barriers, and socio-cultural norms perpetuating inequality. This evidence-based approach ensures that policies and strategies are not only well-informed but also contextually relevant, significantly increasing their likelihood of success.

**Bridging the Gap Between Research and Practice**

One of the most compelling impacts of Behavioural Equality lies in its potential to bridge the longstanding gap between academic research and practical application. By adopting a pragmatic approach that values contextual applicability, the field can generate actionable knowledge that directly informs organisational practices and EDI initiatives. This alignment between theory and practice ensures that research findings translate into tangible improvements in workplace equality, ultimately contributing to more just and equitable organisational environments.

**Fostering Social Change**

Beyond the confines of organisational contexts, Behavioural Equality has the potential to impact broader social change. By unpacking the complex interplay between individual behaviours, societal norms, and structural inequalities, this field can inform public discourses and social movements advocating for equality and justice. In doing so, Behavioural Equality contributes to a more inclusive societal ethos, where diversity is valued, and equality is actively pursued.

**Addressing Global Challenges**

In an increasingly globalised world, the insights garnered from Behavioural Equality can play a pivotal role in addressing transnational challenges related to inequality and discrimination. By incorporating diverse cultural perspectives and exploring behavioural patterns across different societal contexts, Behavioural Equality can contribute to global strategies to foster inclusivity and reduce disparities. This global impact underscores the field's relevance in an interconnected world where the pursuit of equality transcends geographical and cultural boundaries.

The potential impact of Behavioural Equality extends well beyond the theoretical contributions to academic literature. Its implications for organisational practices, policy formulation, social change, and global inclusivity highlight the transformative power of this emerging field. As Behavioural Equality continues to evolve, its interdisciplinary nature and pragmatic orientation have the potential to catalyse meaningful advancements towards a more equitable and inclusive society.

# 6.0 Challenges and Limitations

The introduction of Behavioural Equality as a new field of research presents several challenges and limitations inherent in pioneering any interdisciplinary field. These challenges include resistance from established disciplines, methodological complexities, and societal implications. Addressing these hurdles necessitates a multifaceted approach that acknowledges the intricacies of behavioural patterns and their impact on societal inequalities.

1. **Interdisciplinary Resistance**: As Behavioural Equality bridges domains like behavioural economics, psychology, sociology, and organisational studies, it may face resistance from these established fields due to perceived encroachment or dilution of disciplinary boundaries.
2. **Methodological Complexity**: The proposed field aims to utilise specialised research methodologies to explore the nuanced interplay between behaviour and equality. This complexity may pose challenges in ensuring methodological rigour and consistency across studies.
3. **Overcoming WEIRD Bias**: The criticism of behavioural science for its predominant focus on Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) societies (Bryan, Tipton, and Yeager, 2021) underscores the need for Behavioural Equality to adopt a more inclusive and diverse research perspective.
4. **Addressing the Replication Crisis**: The lack of a cumulative framework in behavioural sciences (Fleetwood, 2005; Muthukrishna and Henrich, 2019) presents a challenge in building a coherent body of knowledge in Behavioural Equality.
5. **Practical Application**: Translating theoretical insights into actionable strategies within organisational settings may prove difficult, given the complexity of human behaviour and organisational dynamics.

**Overcoming Challenges**

1. **Fostering Interdisciplinary Collaboration**: Establishing cross-disciplinary research teams and forums can facilitate dialogue and collaboration between established fields and Behavioural Equality, enriching the new field with diverse perspectives.
2. **Developing Standardised Methodologies**: Crafting a set of standardised yet flexible methodologies that can be adapted to various research contexts within Behavioural Equality will ensure methodological rigour and comparability of results.
3. **Global and Diverse Research Perspectives**: Actively seeking and incorporating research from non-WEIRD populations will enhance the field's relevance and applicability across diverse societal contexts.
4. **Building a Cumulative Framework**: Emphasising the development of a coherent theoretical and empirical framework for Behavioural Equality can address the replication crisis and contribute to the field's stability and growth.
5. **Bridging Theory and Practice**: Establishing partnerships with organisations and policymakers can facilitate the translation of research insights into practical EDI strategies, ensuring the field's relevance to real-world challenges.

The introduction of Behavioural Equality as a new field of research holds significant potential to advance our understanding of diversity and equality in organisational contexts. While challenges such as interdisciplinary resistance, methodological complexity, and the need for practical application present hurdles, these can be overcome through collaborative, inclusive, and pragmatic approaches. By acknowledging and addressing these challenges, Behavioural Equality can catalyse meaningful societal change, leading to more inclusive and equitable organisations and societies.

# 7.0 Conclusion:

Establishing Behavioural Equality as a distinct field of research marks a pivotal moment in the interdisciplinary exploration of diversity, equality, and inclusion within organisational and societal contexts. This paper has traversed the theoretical underpinnings, challenges, and potential impacts of Behavioural Equality, illuminating its capacity to redefine conventional approaches to diversity management and equality initiatives.

Behavioural Equality emerges as a response to the limitations of traditional models such as Diversity Management, Equal Opportunities, and Affirmative Action. By integrating insights from behavioural sciences, this new field seeks to uncover the complex behavioural and structural dynamics that underlie inequality and diversity within organisations. It proposes a shift from viewing diversity as a mere metric or target towards understanding it as an outcome of equitable practices and inclusive cultures.

The challenges associated with pioneering this interdisciplinary field—ranging from resistance from established disciplines to methodological complexities—highlight the necessity for a collaborative, inclusive, and flexible approach. Overcoming these hurdles is paramount for Behavioural Equality to realise its full potential in informing policy, shaping organisational practices, and fostering a deeper understanding of the behavioural dimensions of equality.

In conclusion, Behavioural Equality is a testament to the evolving landscape of EDI research. It advocates a paradigm shift towards a more nuanced, behaviourally informed understanding of equality. As this field continues to develop, it aims to engender more equitable, inclusive, and diverse organisational environments and societies.

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