Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Boehringer Ingelheim

Julia Hübner[1], Alina Traut[2]

ABSTRACT

Societal changes and the evolving workplace dynamics have created the necessity for corporate diversity, equity, and inclusion play a pivotal role in driving competitive advantage, enhancing innovation, and ensuring sustainable business success. This article examines the theoretical framework of diversity, equity, and inclusion and the practice of the global pharmaceutical company Boehringer Ingelheim through qualitative case study method. Furthermore, in depth-interview was conducted with Head of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at Boehringer Ingelheim Germany. As a result, the key findings of this study highlight the transformative impact of DEI initiatives on corporate culture, employee satisfaction, talent acquisition and overall productivity.

Keywords: diversity; equity; inclusion; global trends; Boehringer Ingelheim; company; workplace; strategy; employees

1. Introduction

In the context of demographic change, global trends and the shortage of skilled workers, the business environment has undergone a significant transformation in the recent years. The world of work is becoming increasingly flexible, and digitalization and globalization are leading to innovation. (Matusiewicz & Kaiser, 2018) This is evident not only in human interactions within our society but also in our everyday work life and the way we handle corporate institutions. In order to remain competitive in an ever-changing market, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) has become essential for employers. According to the McKinsey report "Diversity Matters", companies that fall, within the top 25% in terms of "racial and ethnic diversity" are 35% more probable to achieve financial returns higher than their national industry medians. Moreover, companies in the top quartile for "gender diversity" have a 15% increased probability of reaching financial returns above their relevant national industry medians. In contrast,

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[1] Julia Hübner, student, Budapest Business University, e-mail: julia-emily@web.de
[2] Alina Traut, student, Budapest Business University, e-mail: alinatraut@web.de

companies without diversity and inclusion programs are more likely to perform below average in terms of their returns. (Hunt et al., 2015)

Similarly, the study "Diversity Trends.", conducted by the Charta der Vielfalt showed that two-thirds of all companies see specific benefits associated with diversity management. This includes not only an improved corporate image but similarly an increased attractiveness for existing and new employees. As well as the promotion of innovation, motivation, and creativity. Additionally, the study highlighted that 63% of companies in Germany expect diversity management to become even more relevant in the future. (Charta der Vielfalt e.V., n.d.-a)

The growing importance of diversity, equity and inclusion is creating new challenges for employers. Companies will only be successful if they focus not only on economic growth, but also on DEI. This is because the performance and motivation of the workforce, and therefore the operational success of a company, depend decisively on it. As a consequence, in order to achieve sustainable operational success and exceptional business results, companies need to implement and sustain a DEI program. (Hunt et al., 2015)

The aim of the research was to explore and illustrate the DEI practices of a global company. In this context, two research questions arise: (1) How does a does a global company implement DEI aspects into its operations? and (2) What are the results of an implemented DEI strategy for a global company?

2. Theoretical background

Before discussing diversity, equity and inclusion, it is important to first explain and define the meaning of the terms.

Diversity is generally understood in international discourse to mean variety, uniqueness, or multiplicity. When applied to business entities, it includes both the disparities and commonalities within a group, marked by individual personality attributes and distinct lifestyles. (Bernstein et al., 2020) When applied to business entities, it includes the disparities as well as the commonalities within a group, marked by individual personality attributes and distinct lifestyles (Schach, 2023). Thus, the concept of diversity encompasses not only visible traits but also unseen characteristics that are reflected in employees' subjective attitudes, viewpoints, and outlooks (Sherman et al., 2021). When considered comprehensively, six primary dimensions can be discerned: gender and gender identity, age, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin and nationality, and ethnicity, religion, and belief. (Arndt et al., n.d.)

Equity refers to fair involvement, equality, and justice. It involves ensuring equal opportunities and rectifying existing disparities by including privileges and eliminating obstacles (Rynarzewska et al., 2024). However, it does not imply identical treatment for all individuals. Instead, equity represents equal opportunities and rights tailored to individual needs, aiming to optimize each person's performance and fully realize justice and fairness. (Sherman et al., 2021) In a business environment, achieving equity involves crafting individual strategies that cater to the diverse needs of various individuals. (Schach, 2023) It is important to note that there is no one-size-fits-all strategy that companies can adopt concerning equity. Instead, the specific corporate structure determines the necessary actions to ultimately establish equal opportunities and dismantle existing structural, institutional, and cultural barriers. Within this framework, equity requires a thorough examination of current inequalities arising from social background, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, or mental and physical disabilities. (Charta der Vielfalt e.V., n.d.-b)

In sociology, 'inclusion' refers to the mechanisms of integration within social systems, aligning with the principles of participation and non-discrimination in human rights. It represents equal involvement, signifying respect and acknowledgement of all individuals, regardless of their unique characteristics. (Rynarzewska et al., 2024) Therefore, the aim of inclusion is to modify the social system itself to ensure equal access for everyone, rather than molding individuals to fit into it. This requires establishing structural and legal frameworks that offset disadvantages and facilitate participation. (Bernstein et al., 2020) Often, it is necessary to dismantle old structures and reconstruct them with diversity in mind to rectify disadvantages and align them with legally enforced principles. Consequently, diversity and inclusion are considered interconnected concepts, with their interaction being vital for a stimulating and productive work environment. (Hedderich et al., 2016)

Embracing diversity in all its forms not only creates an inclusive environment where everyone is treated equally, but it also enhances decision-making, creativity, and innovation by incorporating and valuing diverse perspectives and ideas (Bernstein et al., 2020). The focus should be on providing equal opportunities, recognizing individual needs, and fostering a culture of respect and appreciation. In this regard, corporate diversity is primarily seen as an economic and social advantage, as companies can boost their employees' performance and simultaneously enhance their well-being by creating an inclusive work environment. (Charta der Vielfalt e.V., n.d.-b)

Over the past few years, the themes diversity, equity and inclusion have become increasingly important in the Workplace. Like the McKinsey report from 2015 already stated "Diversity

matters" and not only in our daily lives but also especially in the corporate world. In addition, the 2021 Statista survey "Where do you think German companies need to catch up when it comes to diversity" shows that there are still several areas that need improvement when it comes to diversity in companies. For instance, "promoting older employees" and "equal opportunity for promotions" have the highest rate of need for improvement with 50.6%, and 50.5%, but more than 40 to 50 percent of respondents thought that integration and inclusion of people with disabilities and women in leadership positions and flexible work hours and family friendly work were also important. (StepStone, 2021b) It is particularly surprising that women hold only 17.5 per cent of all executive positions in the 100 largest companies in Germany. (Statista, 2023-a) This is because these topics have the potential to improve business performance, foster innovation, and increase employee engagement and retention. (Hunt et al., 2015)

It is essential for internationally operating companies to have a positive corporate image and good employer branding. Diversity is a key factor that has a positive impact on this. According to the StepStone Diversity Report published in August 2021, 65.7% of respondents believe that workplace diversity is a success factor in building a positive corporate image. To underline this aspect, another survey conducted by Statista in 2021 shows that the biggest benefit of diversity management for companies is employer branding. Nearly 70 percent of respondents agreed. (StepStone, 2021a)

Dr. S. Gokula Krishnan (2020) drew attention to the importance of the integration of diversity and inclusion in global workplaces. She states that only by "becoming more diversified from all possible dimensions, especially diversity in workforce" a company can remain competitive in the business world. Furthermore, she states that Managers must consider the importance of a diverse environment for attracting and retaining employees. (Krishnan, 2020) In the same way 66% of the people surveyed in the Michael Page's 2021 "Internal Success and Change through Diversity Management" stated that a good diversity management leads to an attractive employer branding (Michael Page, n.d.).

Another important factor is creating an inclusive culture both internally and externally. This is especially true for global companies that operate in diverse markets with customers, clients and stakeholders from different cultural backgrounds (Arndt et al., n.d.). By embracing diversity and creating an inclusive external and internal culture, these companies can better understand and respond to the needs and preferences of their diverse stakeholders. This leads to a better and enhanced understanding of the marketplace, resulting in a competitive advantage. (McKinsey & Company, 2022) Moreover, a McKinsey study from 2020 indicates that companies with effective diversity strategies experience a significant 56% increase in job

performance. Conversely, a single incident of exclusion can cause a 25% decline in an individual's performance within a team project. This shows that, when employees feel included, it leads to an inclined performance at work. As a result, performance levels can improve significantly, leading to higher-quality outputs. (McKinsey & Company, 2020)

In the light of this the Michael Page study from 2021 also highlights that 52% of the respondents mentioned an improved cooperation within the team, since their company has an implemented diversity management (Michael Page, n.d.). Likewise another survey conducted by Statista in 2021 revealed that 55% of respondents considered the prevention of discrimination to be an advantage in terms of internal perception (PageGroup, 2021)
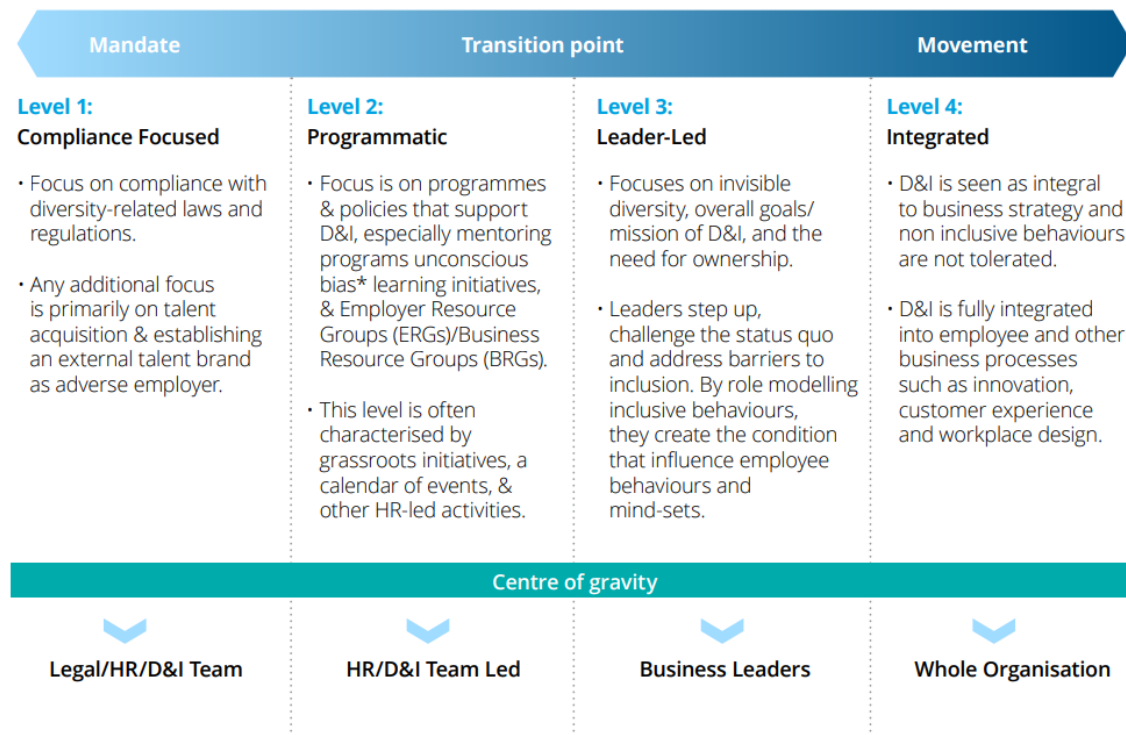
Another important benefit of a diverse and inclusive workplace is that it fosters creativity, innovation and problem-solving. This shows the newest report from "Charta der Vielfalt" from 2020, where 82% of the companies surveyed stated that diversity promotes their innovative strength. The reason is that complex challenges can be solved best when there are as many different roles as possible in the team since different perspectives can be considered. Innovation is only possible when there is knowledge from different origins and acceptance and respect for opinions. Allowing everyone in the company to live out their potential creates a corporate culture characterized by innovation, solution orientation, and productivity. (Charta der Vielfalt e.V., n.d.-a)

Furthermore, another aspect of Michael Page's 2021 "Internal Success and Change through Diversity Management" study shows that diversity also increases employee satisfaction and retention. 50% of respondents reported higher retention and 47% reported greater employee satisfaction. Therefore, accepting diversity and differences contributes to a better working atmosphere. (Michael Page, n.d.)

Nevertheless, implementing measures to promote diversity, equality and inclusion requires a comprehensive and strategic approach in global companies. Since it includes developing complex policies, programs and initiatives which include and support all employees at all levels of the organization. (Schach, 2023)

A DEI case study in the pharmaceutical industry shows that a culture of inclusion must be initiated by the leader, involving employees and external stakeholders (Sakitri, 2015). However, the Deloitte diversity and inclusion maturity model distinguishes between four levels: (1) compliance, (2) programmatic (3) leader-led (4) integrated, the last being the most advanced, where business value creation is at the core.

Figure 1: *Diversity and inclusion maturity model*

Mandate	Transition point		Movement
Level 1: Compliance Focused	**Level 2:** Programmatic	**Level 3:** Leader-Led	**Level 4:** Integrated
· Focus on compliance with diversity-related laws and regulations. · Any additional focus is primarily on talent acquisition & establishing an external talent brand as adverse employer.	· Focus is on programmes & policies that support D&I, especially mentoring programs unconscious bias* learning initiatives, & Employer Resource Groups (ERGs)/Business Resource Groups (BRGs). · This level is often characterised by grassroots initiatives, a calendar of events, & other HR-led activities.	· Focuses on invisible diversity, overall goals/ mission of D&I, and the need for ownership. · Leaders step up, challenge the status quo and address barriers to inclusion. By role modelling inclusive behaviours, they create the condition that influence employee behaviours and mind-sets.	· D&I is seen as integral to business strategy and non inclusive behaviours are not tolerated. · D&I is fully integrated into employee and other business processes such as innovation, customer experience and workplace design.

Centre of gravity

Legal/HR/D&I Team	HR/D&I Team Led	Business Leaders	Whole Organisation

Source: (Deloitte, 2021)

3. Research Questions and Methodology

3.1. Research questions

Based on the literature review, two research questions were formulated: (1) How does a global company implement DEI aspects into its operations? (2) What are the results of an implemented DEI strategy for a global company?

3.2. Case study as research method

The research methodology used is a case study to explore the questions as to why the implementation of DEI in global companies is of particular importance, how DEI measures can be implemented in a global company and the results of an implemented DEI strategy for a global company. This case study is based on a multi-stage approach, allowing for comprehensive examination. It incorporates both qualitative and quantitative methods, as well as theoretical and practical research to ensure a holistic understanding of the topic of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the corporate context. (Baxter & Jack, 2008) In general, does research methodology embody the systematic application of techniques, procedures, and instruments for data collection and analysis to achieve specific research objectives. In this case, theoretical

research methods, as well as the use of a best practice example are employed to examine the significance of DEI in global companies, analyze the effective implementation of DEI measures, and evaluate the results of an implemented DEI strategy. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015)

This research methodology has both advantages and disadvantages. For example, a benefit of using a multi-stage approach is that it enables a more thorough analysis of the issue and contributes to the validity of the results (Noor, 2008). Furthermore, the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods provides a broader perspective and enables the understanding of complex interrelationships. Additionally, the use of a best-practice example delivers practical insights and identifies implemented strategies. However, there are also disadvantages, such as the fact that the selection of a best practice example as a case study may lead to limited generalizable findings. (Dul & Hak, 2007) Resulting in findings that might not be transferable to other companies. In addition, relying on existing data and reports may lead to limitations in terms of information availability and completeness. Moreover, the research methodology demands a significant time investment for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. (Rajasekar & Verma, n.d.)

For the case study at hand two main types of research methodology were used: qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative methods involve content analysis of internal company documents, reports, and personal work experience to assess the implementation and outcomes of DEI measures and gain insights into the company's DEI initiatives. Quantitative methods include analysis of statistical data and metrics to evaluate the importance and influence of DEI. On top of that, already conducted surveys of employee satisfaction and perception of DEI efforts have been analyzed. (Widdowson, 2011)

3.3. Case selection

In order to gain a more comprehensive insight into the topic of diversity and inclusion at global workplaces, it is examined using the company Boehringer Ingelheim as an example. This company was chosen since it is one of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies and is very globally and internationally positioned with numerous locations around the world. Furthermore, this organization was chosen as it had been awarded for the third year in succession as a „Global Top Employer", being one of the world's 15 best employers. (Boehringer Ingelheim, 2023-a) In addition, Boehringer Ingelheim has a well-known and cherished diversity, equity and inclusion program and employees just in Germany over 101 (Boehringer Ingelheim, 2019). To emphasize Boehringer Ingelheim's passion for diversity, equity and inclusion, it is important to mention that they are one of the signatories of the "Charta

der Vielfalt". Moreover, Boehringer Ingelheim is also mentioned and introduced as a best practice example in the "Charta der Vielfalt" and recognized for their diversity, equity and inclusion project. (Charta der Vielfalt, 2024)

3.4. Data collection

At the start of the data collection process, reports and published articles from Boehringer Ingelheim were reviewed to determine the significance of the topic in the company's context and gain an overview of the current situation within its corporate structures. In addition, the company's website was thoroughly analyzed. Following this, an internal conversation was held with the "Head of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at Boehringer Ingelheim Germany". Therefore, this facilitated the gathering of pertinent information and resolution of any outstanding queries. Furthermore, the authors of this paper were granted access to internal drives, networks, and articles. This enabled the identification of a majority of the information needed for the case study and the consolidation of internal information. Finally, all the obtained and gathered information was combined and assessed in the case study presented in this paper.

4. Case study

4.1. Company portrait

Boehringer Ingelheim is an internationally operating, family-owned pharmaceutical company that was founded in 1885 by Albert Boehringer in Ingelheim am Rhein. Originally, the company was involved in the production of tartaric acid salts for pharmacies and dye works. Today, Boehringer Ingelheim is one of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies. The company has a total of 142 subsidiaries and employs more than 52,000 people. Boehringer Ingelheim's main business is the research, development, manufacture, and sale of medicines for humans and animals. The drugs are produced in the indication areas of oncology, cardiovascular, metabolism, respiratory, immunology and central nervous system. The company has set itself the goal of creating new value through innovation in areas of unmet medical need. The company's business areas include Human Pharmaceuticals, Animal Health and Biopharmaceuticals. (Boehringer Ingelheim, 2022a)

Over time, Boehringer Ingelheim has expanded its portfolio and established new sites. There are now four sites across Germany: Ingelheim, Biberach, Dortmund and Ochsenhausen, which employ a total of around 17,000 people. (Boehringer Ingelheim, 2022a)

4.2. Vision and Values

Boehringer Ingelheim has the primary goal of improving the health of people and animals. In particular, the focus is on rare diseases for which no satisfactory treatment options exist so far. The company is strongly committed to developing innovative therapies that can improve and prolong patients' lives. With the overarching goal of improving the health of humans and animals to the best possible extent, Boehringer Ingelheim has the vision to be a globally leading, research-oriented company that creates value. Therefore, the company specializes in the research and development of new therapeutic approaches to address unmet medical needs. Nevertheless, the patient is always at the center of the company's activities, and the company strives to prolong the lives of both humans and animals. (Boehringer Ingelheim, 2022b)

Boehringer Ingelheim stands for not only bringing generations together and taking responsibility for the community but also for advocating for its employees and creating a diverse, collaborative, and open environment. Boehringer Ingelheim's vision is to maintain quality in everything we do with a passion for improving the overall health of patients. In addition, BI values collaboration within the company, including accountability, agility, and intrapreneurship. Furthermore, the company aims to handle decisions responsibly, be open to external and internal changes, and work together with customers to find innovative solutions. Boehringer Ingelheim's core values are centered on driving innovation to improve lives. This translates into a culture that values both collaboration and respect for diverse perspectives. They believe this combination is key to achieving long-term success in their mission of creating groundbreaking healthcare solutions.(Boehringer Ingelheim, 2022b)

4.3. Introduction in diversity, equity and inclusion at Boehringer Ingelheim

At Boehringer Ingelheim, diversity, equity and inclusion is considered a guiding principle that is crucial for the health and quality of life of employees and customers. Boehringer Ingelheim strongly believes that diversity is a tremendous asset for the company. Since the company can better understand its customers and markets and drive innovation through the diversity of its employees and their perspectives. Therefore, the company aims to leverage the diversity and variety of its employees to create new value in order to improve the health of humans and animals in the long term and sustainably. (Boehringer Ingelheim, 2019)

Boehringer Ingelheim prioritizes diversity, equity, and inclusion driven by the motto of "Diversity based on conviction". As a result, the company values mutual respect, which benefits both individuals and the organization as a whole. Therefore, BI is committed to creating a trusting environment where every individual's opinion is valued, and diverse perspectives are

openly acknowledged. Besides global obstacles, the pharmaceutical company Boehringer Ingelheim has been recognized for its commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. Boehringer Ingelheim has enforced several initiatives such as its Diversity Charter, mentoring programs, and flexible work arrangements. Additionally, the DEI strategy and its associated goals, which will be discussed in chapter 9.4, also improve the company's reputation as an employer and assist in the global search for talent. In general, to ensure continued success, the company acknowledges the significance of a diverse workforce, including individuals of different genders, ages, cultures, worldviews, sexual orientations, and abilities or disabilities.

The following overview shows the areas of diversity within the company: nationalities, gender, generations, family friendliness and disability (Figure 2).

Figure 2: *Boehringer Ingelheim's diversity areas*
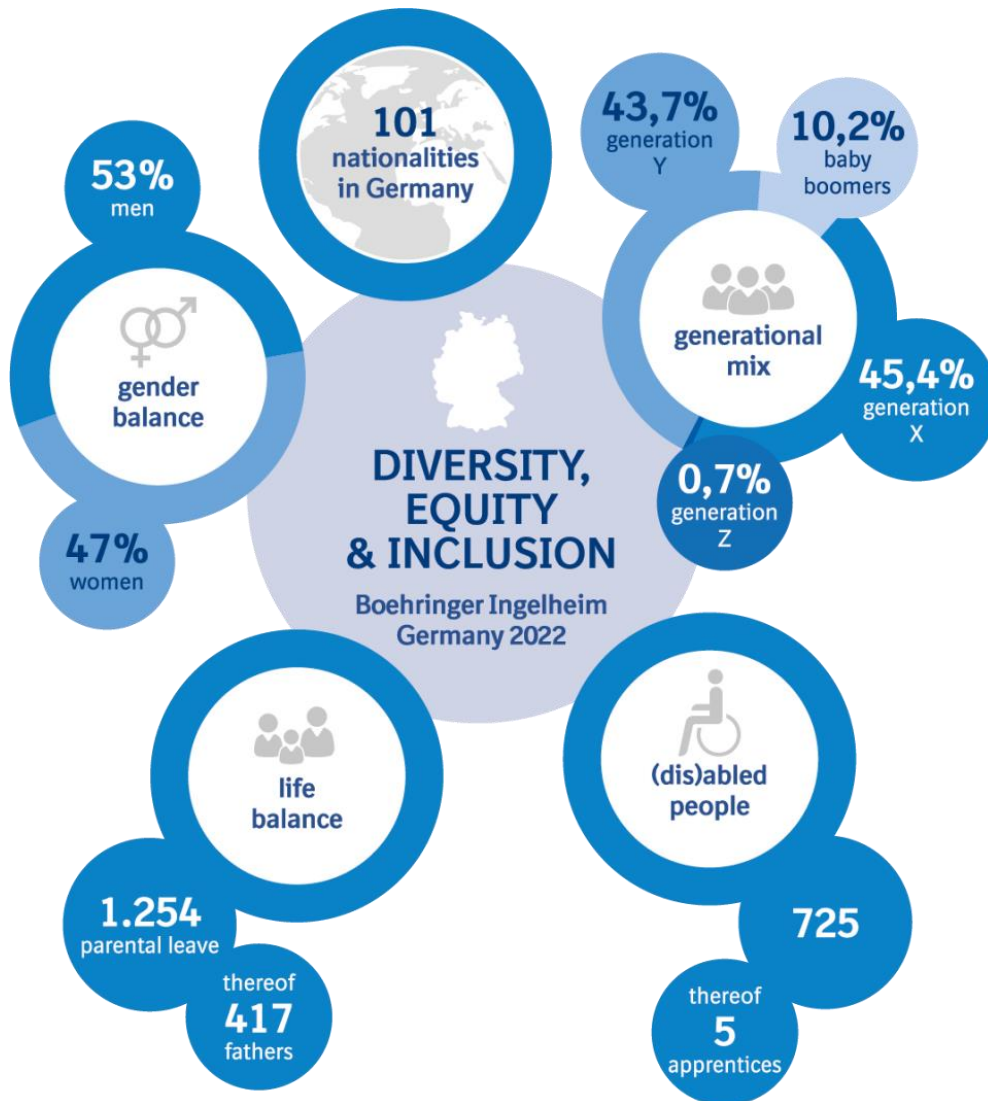
Source: Authors' own figure based on Boehringer Ingelheim, 2019

In 2022, Boehringer Ingelheim had a diverse workforce consisting of 101 nationalities, including 725 individuals with disabilities. On top of that, the gender ratio was almost equal, with men accounting for 53% and women for 47% of the workforce. Besides that, the company also values generational diversity as a key factor in its sustainable success and ongoing growth. Most of the workforce, 89.1%, belongs to 'Generation Y' and 'Generation X'. However, the company also has a diverse age range with representation from Baby Boomers and Generation Z, accounting for 10.2% and 0.7% of employees, respectively. Additionally, Boehringer Ingelheim supports family-friendly policies, as demonstrated by its 1,254 employees on parental leave. (Boehringer Ingelheim, 2019) By analyzing Boehringer Ingelheim as a best

practice example, we can gain insights into effective strategies for developing and implementing DEI measures in a global company and their results.

4.4. The DEI-Strategy at Boehringer Ingelheim

It is important to note that the authors of the paper are employees of Boehringer Ingelheim and work in the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion department. Therefore, no external sources are cited in the following texts, as the information is based solely on their work experience and the intranet at Boehringer Ingelheim.

Boehringer Ingelheim promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion at both local and global levels. At the global level, Boehringer Ingelheim aims to better understand the needs of patients and customers and create an inclusive culture that drives innovation. At the local level, the company creates conditions that allow employees to develop individually and ensure their well-being. Equal opportunities and a respectful cooperation among employees are the top priorities. Therefore, the overall aim is to improve innovation potential and customer understanding, as well as increase the attractiveness as an employer both internally and externally. (Internal HR Strategy)

The company implements various strategies to achieve this goal. In Germany, BI has developed a DEI strategy for the years 2021-2025, which is divided into four strategic drivers: cultural and social development, creating the necessary framework, LEARN/Qualification and company reputation. (Internal diversity strategy)

Figure 3 shows Boehringer Ingelheim's DEI system with the strategic drivers, the desired outcomes and the implementation ideas.

Figure 3: *Boehringer Ingelheim's diversity, equity and inclusion strategy system in Germany*

Strategy DEI Germany 2021-2025

Strategic drivers			
Cultural and societal development	**Creating the necessary framework**	**LEARN/Qualification**	**Company reputation**

Desired Outcomes			
We create awareness for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, taking the specific roles inside and outside the company into account. We encourage initiatives and support engaged colleagues to promote the sustainable development of a diverse & inclusive company and society. In doing so, we live up to our societal and social responsibility.	Legal and collectively agreed requirements in the DEI context are implemented. Company agreements take the DEI strategy into account. This applies to agreements with the workers council, as well as business processes and infrastructural activities.	Diversity, Equity & Inclusion is integral part of our qualification offers. Additionally, specific qualification for DEI topics are available. This enables BI employees to grow personally and professionally.	Boehringer Ingelheim is regarded as an attractive employer for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion both internally and externally. The company is valued by employees, customers and partner organizations for its attitude and activities in the DEI context.

Implementation			
• Initiatives e.g. „Charta der Vielfalt" • Diversity networks e.g. BI Rainbow Network, BI Fathers Network Germany	• Work agreements • Operational regulations • Inclusion of new laws	• Integrity Minutes • E-learnings • Coaching sessions	• Media appearances • Social media • Events • Conferences

Source: Authors' own figure based on internal references

4.4.1. Cultural and social development

For Boehringer Ingelheim the focus of this driver is on raising awareness for DEI while considering the various roles both within and outside the company. Therefore, Boehringer Ingelheim takes its social and societal responsibility seriously and plans to support sustainable development through various initiatives and partnerships. In 2012, the company signed the 'Charter of Diversity', which is a significant initiative aimed at promoting diversity within the organization (Charta der Vielfalt, 2020). For instance, Boehringer Ingelheim has several diversity networks, such as the BI Rainbow Network Germany and the BI Fathers Network Germany (Boehringer Ingelheim, 2023-b). These networks aim to facilitate the exchange of information, represent interests, establish new contacts, and initiate various processes.

For example, the BI Rainbow Network offers a secure platform for Boehringer Ingelheim employees to share their common experiences and showcase the diversity of the company through collaborative initiatives. The members of this network identify as having a different sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or gender characteristics than the majority of the population. Similarly, the BI Fathers Network Germany provides fathers with the chance to internally exchange and network with colleagues on relevant topics. This ensures individual compatibility between work and private life. (Boehringer Ingelheim, 2023-b)

4.4.2. Creating the necessary framework

The driver 'Creating the necessary framework' encompasses the implementation of collective bargaining and legal requirements related to DEI. This involves various business processes, works agreements, and infrastructural activities. Boehringer Ingelheim establishes a framework through work agreements and operational regulations, including the group works agreement, to regulate internal coexistence and promote successful cooperation. However, the company also incorporates other new laws such as the Self-Determination Act (Die Bundesregierung, 2023) and the Severely Disabled Persons Act (behinderung.org, n.d.). For instance, the Self-Determination Act aims to simplify and standardize regulations on gender identity, while the Severely Disabled Persons Act promotes the self-determination and equal participation of people with disabilities in society (Boehringer Ingelheim, 2016).

4.4.3. LEARN/Qualification

Boehringer Ingelheim promotes the professional and personal development of its employees through various learning and qualification opportunities in the 'LEARN/Qualification' driver. These opportunities include e-learnings, integrity minutes, and coaching sessions, with a focus on DEI topics. (Internal DEI strategy documents)

One of the e-learnings offered is training on unconscious biases in everyday life. This training provides knowledge about diversity, its different forms, and helps to identify and reduce unconscious biases. On top of that, the training explains the importance of inclusion and how to make daily work more inclusive. (Internal DEI strategy documents)

Integrity Minutes on the topic of anti-discrimination are a part of the learning environment at Boehringer Ingelheim. These short presentations aim to provide insight into the company's values and visions, with a focus on inclusion, anti-discrimination, and fair treatment. Employees can take a targeted break with these Integrity Minutes at the beginning of meetings or events to better understand and sensitive themselves to the topic. (Internal DEI strategy documents)

In addition, Boehringer Ingelheim offers a range of coaching services, including Role Discovery Coaching. This service provides support to female leaders and professionals in defining their position in relation to their career and family, identifying their needs under existing conditions, setting priorities correctly, managing time effectively, and developing an action plan for their next steps. Hence the aim is to support and encourage talented female professionals and leaders, especially during the period of starting or expanding their family. (Boehringer Ingelheim, 2023-b)

4.4.4. Company reputation

Another aspect is the 'Company reputation', which is the final driver of the DEI strategy in Germany. In fact, the company is perceived as an attractive employer in the field of diversity, equity and inclusion, both internally and externally. Boehringer Ingelheim is highly regarded by employees, customers, and partner organizations, particularly for its DEI attitude and activities. Therefore, Boehringer endeavors to maintain and enhance its reputation through media appearances, social media, events and conferences. Consequently, the company presents itself as a strong employer brand with unified and structured social media channels, such as LinkedIn and Instagram, conveying its values and visions. Nevertheless, Boehringer Ingelheim's attractiveness is also supported by its active participation in events and interests. The company has participated in several events, including Christopher Street Day in Mainz, where they promoted diversity with the motto 'We show #FlagforDiversity'. (LinkedIn, 2023) Additionally, Boehringer has contributed to the successful execution of the Prout at Work conference through plenary discussions (Prout at work, 2023).

Figure 3 shows Boehringer Ingelheim's DEI system with the strategic drivers, the desired outcomes and the implementation ideas.

4.5 Results

Considering all of these aspects, it is evident that the implementation of DEI strategies at Boehringer Ingelheim has resulted in several positive outcomes. By integrating the topic into the company context and promoting DEI both externally and internally, Boehringer has benefited in many areas.

4.5.1 Corporate Culture

In connection with corporate culture, strong DEI programs can have a significant impact. This impact is likely due to the enriched set of experiences and perspectives that a diverse workforce brings to the table. It shows that workplaces that foster inclusion experience increased collaboration and innovation. The fostered sense of belonging, in turn, can lead to improved decision-making, problem-solving within the organization, as diverse teams are better able to identify and address challenges from multiple perspectives (McKinsey & Company, 2023). Boehringer Ingelheim has enforced several initiatives such as its Diversity Charter, mentoring programs, and flexible work arrangements. This resulted in the creation of a corporate culture which is founded on mutual respect, empathy, tolerance, and trust. Boehringer is one of the

largest pharmaceutical companies in Germany, with steadily growing revenues and a pipeline of new products that are the result of an enhanced corporate culture that encourages the exchange of information and perspectives. (Statista, 2023-b)

4.5.2 Employee Satisfaction

The employee satisfaction is a top priority and result in this regard. Since the inclusive and open work environment makes employees feel valued and respected, it also leads to higher satisfaction and productivity. Hence, Boehringer Ingelheim was awarded the 'Glassdoor Best Employer' award in 2022, founded on voluntary and anonymous feedback from employees. This recognition demonstrates that the employees at BI feel comfortable in the inclusive and diverse work environment. (Boehringer Ingelheim, 2022c)

Additionally, implementing DEI measures can enhance and promote the company's public image. As a result, the successful implementation of a DEI program has a significant impact on Boehringer Ingelheim's reputation and employer branding.

4.5.3 Talent acquisition

Developing talent acquisition is an important achievement. By actively promoting diversity, equity and inclusion, the company enhances its standing as an employer of choice. This makes BI more appealing to potential talent and simplifies talent acquisition. Besides that, the positive perception as a diversity friendly organization plays a crucial role in attracting and retaining talented professionals. Boehringer Ingelheim's commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace is exemplified by its recognition as a "Global Top Employer" by The Top Employers Institute for the third year in succession. Therefore, this makes Boehringer Ingelheim one of the 15 best employers in the world. (Boehringer Ingelheim, 2023-a) Furthermore, this certification also underscores the company's commitment to prioritizing the mental health of its employees. Boehringer's diverse presence and numerous opportunities provide everyone with the chance to join the company. Particularly in times of skill shortages, globalization and demographic change offers this a competitive advantage for Boehringer Ingelheim. (Boehringer Ingelheim, 2023-b)

4.5.4 Customer Satisfaction

Furthermore, promoting diversity within the company can enhance customer satisfaction. By considering DEI issues, Boehringer can gain a better understanding of its customers and more effectively meet their needs. For instance, Boehringer has developed a sign language avatar to translate package inserts, making it the first pharmaceutical company to do so. This provides

the hearing-impaired with easy access to product information and applications. By scanning a QR code, customers are redirected to a website where they can access explanatory videos in animated sign language. This innovation can improve customer satisfaction and ultimately contribute to customer retention and acquisition. (Internal HR information)

4.5.5 Productivity

Additionally, a workforce that embraces diversity has the potential to enhance productivity and foster innovation by leveraging a wide range of experiences, perspectives, and knowledge. This, in turn, can lead to better decision-making, increased productivity, and ultimately, the improvement of products and financial performance. (Boehringer Ingelheim 2019) This statement is further supported by the fact that BI is ranked as the third-largest pharmaceutical company in Germany based on revenue (Menzel, 2021).

Another important factor is, that an implemented diversity, equity, and inclusion program can also increase market share. Maria Tereno, Global Head of Diversity & Inclusion at Boehringer Ingelheim, says: "Strong, diverse teams are our most important resource, because it is these teams that develop good ideas. Studies show that many companies do not utilize the diversity of their workforce: Around 40 per cent of all marketable product ideas fall through the cracks - mainly because there is a lack of support. Diversity of thought ensures that we always have plenty of good ideas in the pipeline. Ultimately, this also leads to growing market shares." (Boehringer Ingelheim, 2017) Accordingly, it becomes evident that a diverse workforce can significantly impact and enhance market opportunities by introducing new and innovative ideas to the company.

These results demonstrate the significance of promoting and implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion measures within a company. By prioritizing DEI, not only do employees benefit from the inclusive working environment, but the company as a whole can also gain numerous advantages and benefit from the diversity of its corporate culture.

5. Discussion

This work examined the topic of diversity, equity and inclusion using the example of the global pharmaceutical company Boehringer Ingelheim. Due to societal and demographic changes, the topic of diversity, equity and inclusion is becoming increasingly important in human interactions within our society, in our everyday work life and in corporations. This presents employers with many new challenges in terms of implementing these measures, but also offers many new opportunities.

Our first research question was how Boehringer Ingelheim implemented DEI aspect into its operations. Boehringer Ingelheim signed the diversity charter in 2012 (Charta der Vielfalt, 2024). It has since introduced several measures as part of a process of development over a period of around ten years. The analysis revealed that BI implements various strategies globally and locally to effectively incorporate DEI into the work context. By developing a local strategy for Germany, the company is actively addressing the current needs of society and its employees. This strategy can be divided into four strategic drivers: 'cultural and social development', 'creating the necessary framework', 'LEARN/Qualification', and 'company reputation'. With the four strategic drivers, all important topics related to DEI are addressed in the daily work routine, covering all relevant aspects for employers, employees, and customers.

The measures introduced as part of the cultural and social development strategy driver are the establishment of a wide range of diversity networks, such as the BI Rainbow Network Germany or the BI Fathers Network Germany. As part of the "Creating the necessary framework" strategy driver, Ingelheim creates a framework which outlines all the values, visions and goals that drive the company, which applies to all employees worldwide. In addition, there are works agreements and company regulations for the German sites. These include the company works agreement, which sets out the rules for living together and working together successfully. The company also incorporates new laws, such as the Self-Determination Act and the Disabled Persons Act, into its day-to-day operations. (Internal DEI strategy documents)

Under the strategic driver LEARN/Qualification, Boehringer applies various learning and qualification opportunities on DEI topics for the professional and personal development of its employees. These include e-learning, integrity protocols and coaching sessions.

The measures introduced for the strategic driver "corporate reputation" were a consistent and structured presence on social media channels such as LinkedIn or Instagram, presenting the company as a strong employer brand and communicating its values and visions. (Internal DEI strategy documents)

Our second research question was what the results of an implemented DEI strategy for the company were. Through the example of Boehringer Ingelheim, in line with the literature Boehringer Ingelheim (2019) it became clear that the implementation of DEI measures had not only positively influenced the corporate culture but has also created a respectful work environment that fosters long-term commitment from employees. Additionally, at Boehringer Ingelheim they have been able to successfully improve not only the performance of their workers but also their corporate image and culture, as highlighted in a number of literatures as

a benefit of DEI Boehringer Ingelheim (2017) and Boehringer Ingelheim (2019). Therefore, their diversity concept has led to an increased productivity, greater employee satisfaction, and higher levels of talent acquisitions, which is in line with what Boehringer Ingelheim (2017) describe. Besides that, they were able to establish a work environment which includes individuals with physical and mental disabilities in the development of new products. Thus, the company acts as a pioneer for many other companies, contributing positively to greater equality and giving voice to those affected. Boehringer Ingelheim having an established framework and concept for diversity and inclusion, has maximized its profits and gained a competitive advantage as written in several literatures. (Statista, 2023-b)

However, it should be noted that an implementation of diversity, equity and inclusion systems and measures must be seen as a long-term project that requires the participation of all employees. Building a truly inclusive workplace goes beyond just hiring a diverse workforce. Deloitte's Diversity and Inclusion Maturity Model offers a framework for organizations to assess their progress in creating an environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their best. The model outlines four stages of maturity (Compliance, Programmatic, Leader-Led, Integrated). According to the Diversity and inclusion maturity model from Deloitte (2021), Boehringer Ingelheim is at the fourth integrated level. This is shown through various aspects. For instance, leadership commitment. At Boehringer Ingelheim senior executives are vocal advocates for DEI, integrating it into their strategic vision and holding themselves and others accountable for progress. This becomes obvious through Boehringer's various leadership development programs. (Boehringer Ingelheim, 2022c) Furthermore, through the fostering of an inclusive corporate culture, BI strives to establish an environment where diverse perspectives are valued and heard. Teams are built to leverage these differences, leading to more creative and innovative solutions. Additionally, the talent Acquisition and Development actively seeks diverse talent and provides inclusive onboarding and development opportunities to ensure everyone can thrive. (Boehringer Ingelheim, 2017) However, Boehringer's success at level 4 does not mark the end of the journey. It is a continuous process of refinement and adaptation. Nonetheless, their commitment to integration ensures a workplace where everyone feels included and can contribute to their full potential.

DEI also presents the company with several challenges. One of these is the implementation of DEI-enhancing measures through various communication channels. Due to the complex structure of the company, it is not always easy to pass on information, as employees are often not informed about measures or are informed with a delay, which leads to communication problems and an imbalance of information. In the future, it will be very important for the

company to find ways to ensure consistent and comprehensive communication. Especially for companies of Boehringer Ingelheim's size, transparent information sharing can be challenging due to the complex and extensive corporate structure (Dühring, 2022). Another challenge that companies may face is the time and costs associated with implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion measures. Not all companies have the time and resources to establish a dedicated DEI department or a long-term strategic plan with various measures. However, every company can begin with small steps and work towards a fair and sustainable future. Nevertheless, once these hurdles are overcome, DEI signifies progress. (Ofer, 2012)

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, while the establishment of DEI measures within corporate structures presents challenges, the overall positive aspects for both employees and employers outweigh them. However, it is important to note that a major global company such as Boehringer Ingelheim must implement DEI structures to remain competitive in an ever-changing marketplace. Particularly considering global political changes, more and more people will seek and demand a respectful work environment, making the consideration of DEI not only a short-term goal but also an increasingly significant societal role in the future.

This research suggests that there is potential for further development of the concept and additional research into DEI strategies for global companies. Further questions arise from this case study. For instance, whether implementing diversity, equity and inclusion programs should be legally mandated to ensure that companies are taking the realization seriously. Similarly, if diversity metrics and goals should be standardized across industries, or should they be tailored to each organization's unique needs and challenges? Besides that, how can companies ensure that their DEI programs lead to real cultural change, rather than just being superficial? Another research question to be considered is the extent to which executives and board members are responsible for driving DEI efforts in multinational companies.

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