

Communication At Work: Unconscious Bias

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Executive Summary

This report sets out a strategic framework to address unconscious bias at workplace. Drawing on a detailed analysis of common forms of bias, such as those based on appearance, age, gender, and region, the document demonstrates how these biases undermine employee morale, stifle innovation, and threaten both productivity and talent retention. The analysis underscores that unconscious bias is not merely an interpersonal issue but a significant organisational risk with tangible business impacts.

To address these challenges, the report proposes a comprehensive, systemic communication plan grounded in the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI). The strategy targets four distinct stakeholder groups: Senior Leadership, Middle Managers, HR & Recruiters, and Rank-and-File Employees. Each group receives tailored messages and objectives: securing top-level commitment, equipping managers with conflict resolution skills, embedding bias mitigation into HR processes, and empowering all employees to handle conflicts constructively. This approach moves beyond ad hoc training, advocating for a principles-driven and integrated Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiative.

The plan's success will be evaluated through clear metrics, including increased employee satisfaction, customers' feedback, and improved staff retention. By taking a holistic and sustained approach to DEI, this strategy aims to position the organisation as an Employer of Choice in Singapore's competitive landscape, ensuring long-term business performance and a positive workplace culture.

1. 0 Workplace Conflict Analysis Report: A Case Study

1.1 Analysis of Workplace Conflicts

The full video "Unconscious Bias @ Work - Diversity & Inclusion Training" found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDgLQN2bdtw&t=210s> highlights important conflicts that stem from unconscious bias (TrainingSideways, 2018). These issues, though often subtle, can have considerable effects on the professional workplace. While the examples in the video are based in a foreign context, it is important to recognise that unconscious bias is prevalent in workplaces everywhere.

Appearance-Based Bias: The initial conflict emerges when a male colleague (Mr Mishra G) compliments a female colleague's (Ms Shalini Jain's) appearance. While seemingly innocuous, it has the potential to cause discomfort and create perceptions of partiality or diminished professional regard. In this scenario, the recipient may experience uncertainty regarding whether her professional achievements are being adequately recognised, as attention is directed towards her appearance.

Regional and Gender Stereotypes: A colleague (Ms Shalini Jain) jokingly suggests that another colleague (Ms Kavitha Iyer), who is from Chennai, should use her "Madras bonding" to secure leave. Though intended as a joke, this comment is a form of microaggression, subtly reinforcing the damaging stereotype that people from certain regions receive preferential treatment based on identity rather than merit. Such remarks erode professional credibility and signal that an individual's achievements may be attributed to regional connections rather than competence. The resulting tension and emotional discomfort highlight the real harm behind "harmless" humour, exposing an underlying challenge to fairness and meritocracy in the workplace.

Age-Based Work Ethic Bias: The manager (Mr Venkat Iyer) exhibits unconscious bias toward younger employees (such as Mr Akshay Rao), assuming they lack professional commitment and are more prone to taking excessive breaks. This bias manifests in passive-aggressive remarks and giving fewer desirable assignments. Over time, such behaviour fosters a hostile work environment, breeding resentment and diminishing morale among younger team members. Left unaddressed, this pattern not only undermines team cohesion but may also expose the organisation to legal and reputational risks related to age-based discrimination.

Age and Disability Bias: A younger employee (Mr Akshay Rao) assumes that an older colleague (Mr Mishra G), who uses a cane, is incapable of handling a project that requires travel. This assumption, based on age and disability, directly denies the older employee an opportunity. This is a clear example of workplace bias and discrimination. Such stereotypes not only undermine the confidence and career growth of affected employees but also limit the organisation's ability to benefit from diverse perspectives and experiences.

1.2 Aspects of Employee Relations Affected By Conflicts

The video's conflicts, stemming from unconscious biases, directly affect employee relations emotionally and practically.

Emotional Aspect: This aspect concerns the psychological well-being, morale, and feelings of respect and value among employees. All four conflicts in the video triggers distinct emotional consequences.

- The female colleague's discomfort from the compliment is an emotional response, making her feel undervalued for her professional skills.
- The "Madrasa bonding" joke provokes emotional hurt and frustration, undermining trust and creating a sense of being unfairly stereotyped and singled out based on her regional background.
- The manager's bias against younger employees breeds resentment and a hostile work environment, which is an emotional issue that can impact job satisfaction and engagement.
- The assumption about the older employee's inability to travel creates feelings of being overlooked and marginalised as age and disability are seen as barriers rather than strengths.

By identifying these specific emotional impacts, the analysis highlights how each action or comment can deeply affect individuals' workplace experiences and overall well-being.

Practical Aspect: This aspect addresses how unconscious biases affect individuals, team dynamics, and the entire organisation.

- Age and disability bias results in older employees potentially being denied a chance to lead a travel project, affecting his career growth and responsibilities. This can lower team morale, create concerns about fairness, and lead to resentment or disengagement among colleagues.
- Managers' bias against younger employees can influence practical decisions, such as task assignments and workload distribution, potentially leading to an inefficient allocation of human resources, with talent and capabilities underutilised or misdirected, and a reduction in overall productivity.

Over time, this weakens collaboration, stifles idea sharing, erodes trust and disrupts communication, reducing team cohesion and threatening the organisation's adaptability and competitiveness.

1.3 Impact of Conflicts on Workplace and Business

The identified conflicts while sometimes appearing minor, can significantly influence workplace culture and the overall success of an organisation.

- **Reduced Employee Morale and Engagement:** The presence of bias fosters an environment in which employees may feel undervalued, disrespected, or misunderstood. Stereotypical jokes and assumptions related to appearance or age undermine trust and compromise psychological safety. When this sense of security is diminished, morale and engagement are adversely affected, often resulting in decreased productivity as well as increased absenteeism and turnover.
- **Hindered Innovation and Collaboration:** Workplaces affected by unconscious bias frequently experience limited open communication and collaboration. Employees may be reluctant to contribute ideas for fear of being judged based on their background, age, or appearance. This inhibiting atmosphere restricts the free flow of diverse perspectives that are essential for effective problem-solving and innovation, potentially causing the organisation to overlook valuable solutions and market opportunities.
- **Legal and Reputational Risks:** Unconscious bias, if unaddressed, can result in formal discrimination and potential legal action, which can include financial penalties for the organisation. Furthermore, a reputation of biased or toxic work environment can make it challenging to attract and retain top talents. In Singapore, where diversity is considered important, such a reputation could severely damage the brand and overall competitiveness.

By considering these broader effects, it becomes clear that the consequences of unconscious bias at workplace are both immediate and far-reaching, impacting not just individual employees but the very foundation of organisational success.

2.0 Unconscious Bias in Singapore Workplace

2.1 Key Forms of Unconscious Bias in Singapore

Unconscious bias is a significant issue in Singapore's workplaces, with 55% of workers reporting that they experienced some form of discrimination in the five years leading up to a 2022 survey by AWARE and Milieu Insight. This issue is particularly prevalent for minority racial groups (89%), persons with disabilities (78%), and the LGBTQ+ community (68%). While the most common forms of discrimination are based on race (41%), age (35%), and gender (23%), many incidents go unreported, with over half of discrimination victims choosing not to report it due to a lack of trust in management or insufficient evidence. The true scale of the problem is likely much larger than what is reported. (AWARE, 2022) (Tan, 2023; Aw, 2023)

Unconscious bias in Singapore manifests in various ways throughout the employee lifecycle. Examples include:

- **Hiring:** Name bias, where resumes with traditionally minority-sounding names are overlooked. Affinity bias, where interviewers favour candidates who share similar backgrounds or interests. (Glaser, 2023; How to Tackle Unconscious Bias at Workplace? | Keka, 2024)
- **Performance:** Attribution bias, where a manager attributes a female employee's success to external factors while crediting a male counterpart's success to his own ability. Confirmation bias, where a manager seeks out information that confirms their pre-existing beliefs about an employee. (How to Tackle Unconscious Bias at Workplace? | Keka, 2024; International Labour Organisation, 2017).
- **Daily Interactions:** Micro-inequities, such as excluding employees from after-work events, which can limit their professional advancement. (Mathews & Tay, 2024)

2.2 Types of Unconscious Bias in Singapore Workplace

Table A-1 summarises how unconscious biases, such as affinity and confirmation bias, affect Singapore workplaces and the harm they cause. Notably, race and age discrimination are widespread, with one in three employees reporting bias in 2024, a figure above the Asia-Pacific average (Tilo, 2025). These biases lead to less diverse teams, hinder innovation, and increase turnover, highlighting the need to tackle them for a fairer and more effective work environment.

Please refer to Table A-1 on how unconscious biases are manifested within the Singapore workplace and the significant harm they can cause.

2.3 Unconscious Bias Impact on Organisations

Unconscious bias has profound and damaging effects on organisations. It leads to decreased productivity, stifled innovation, and higher turnover rates, ultimately harming an organisation's competitive edge (Randstad Pte. Limited, 2023).

- **Talent and Financial Costs:** A global report found that 54% of employees would quit if they didn't feel a sense of belonging at work. The direct cost of turnover in Singapore is substantial; a 2024 study showed that 33% of employees who experienced discrimination quit their jobs as a result. A single case of dismissal due to unconscious bias at one company resulted in direct losses of \$3.155 million and opportunity costs of \$3.3 million (Colvin, 2025; Aw, 2023; Genspark AI, 2025).
- **Innovation:** Homogeneous teams resulting from affinity bias are less creative and prone to groupthink, leading to poor decision-making (BGC Group Pte Ltd, 2023) (Tripartite Alliance for Fair & Progressive Employment Practices, 2024; Bennett, 2024; International Labour Organisation, 2017; Meenakshi Girish & Datta, 2025).
- **Reputation and Legal Risks:** While Singapore's Workplace Fairness Act does not currently protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, failing to address bias can lead to legal disputes and a tarnished employer brand (pinkdot.sg, 2025; Tan, 2023).

2.4 Future Outlook of Unconscious Bias in Singapore

Unconscious bias is an increasingly important issue within Singapore's workforce. Evidence regarding its frequency, its often-subtle presence in everyday interactions and recruitment, and the documented harms on organisational effectiveness and employee welfare indicate that it constitutes a significant strategic risk rather than a peripheral concern.

Casual racism refers to everyday discriminatory behaviours or remarks that often go unnoticed, yet stem from unconscious bias and social conditioning, subtly perpetuating inequality within the workplace. Analysis of local context indicates that casual racism in Singapore is closely associated with social norms related to conformity and conflict avoidance. As a result, effective solutions should focus not only on raising awareness but also on addressing factors that discourage individuals from expressing their concerns. An increase in reported cases of discrimination may reflect growing awareness and psychological safety, while also highlighting that this issue continues to persist (Mathews & Tay, 2024).

A sustainable path forward requires a systemic, long-term commitment. Addressing unconscious bias demands more than isolated diversity training sessions; it calls for an integrated approach to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). As demonstrated by exemplary organisations in Singapore, an effective DEI strategy should be guided by clear principles, executed through strong leadership as well as broad employee participation, and consistently evaluated using data-driven metrics. By incorporating equitable practices throughout all aspects of operations, from the development of inclusive job descriptions to the use of standardised performance appraisals, organisations can foster a resilient, innovative, and genuinely inclusive culture that unlocks the full potential of Singapore's multicultural workforce (GIC Private Limited, 2025) (Nestlé Singapore, n.d.).

Please refer to Appendix B for a mini report on unconscious bias in Singapore's workforce.

3.0 Proposed Conflict Resolution Strategy: The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI)

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) is a useful tool for helping individuals identify their preferred conflict management styles and thus addressing conflicts and unconscious biases at work. It outlines five different conflict-handling approaches – competing, collaborating, accommodating, avoiding and compromising – helping employees understand and select suitable responses to conflict.

3.1 Why TKI is Selected

Diagnoses Root Cause: The TKI model allows individuals to identify their conflict-handling style as well as the styles of others. This approach can assist in addressing unconscious bias by promoting self-awareness and understanding different perspectives. The model focuses on examining the reasons underlying conflicts rather than seeking to prevail.

Enables Multiple Approaches: The conflicts depicted in the video present various challenges that may require different strategies. For instance, responding to a compliment on appearance might involve an accommodating or collaborating approach, while addressing a denial of opportunity based on age could use competing or collaborating approaches. The TKI offers a range of conflict management strategies rather than prescribing one method.

Facilitates Sustainable Behavioural Change: Through consideration of individual approaches and preferences, the TKI supports the transformation of established behaviours and communication habits, thereby addressing underlying unconscious bias. This approach extends beyond single interventions, fostering an environment of ongoing learning and respectful engagement.

3.2 Using TKI to Resolve Conflicts

Education and Awareness Initiatives: The initial phase involves organising a comprehensive workshop across the company that covers the TKI model and unconscious bias. Managers and employees will participate in the TKI assessment to gain insight into their individual conflict management styles and how they may be impacted by unconscious biases. The workshop will incorporate video vignettes as case studies to provide clear and relevant examples of the concepts discussed.

Facilitate Collaborative Dialogue: For situations involving regional stereotypes or age-related work ethic bias, a **Collaborating** approach can be effective. This method encourages all parties to work together to identify a solution that addresses everyone's concerns. A mediator or HR representative may guide a discussion where every party is able to share their perspective in a constructive environment. The aim is to recognise the issue, consider lessons learned, and agree on updated communication practices.

Addressing Power Dynamics: In situations where there is a power imbalance (such as between a manager and employee or between employees of different ages), both the **Competing** and **Accommodating** approaches of the TKI can be applicable. Managers may use a competing style to enforce company policies related to discrimination, while an accommodating style may be used to provide support to an affected employee. The model can also assist employees who have experienced bias in selecting a suitable approach (such as being assertive) to address conflicts productively.

Set Up Feedback & Reporting Systems: Establish continual feedback and an anonymous bias reporting process to give staff a safe way to voice concerns and help management respond quickly. Schedule regular check-ins and refresher sessions on TKI and unconscious bias.

4.0 Resolving Conflicts: A Strategic Communication Plan

4.1 Education and Raising Awareness

To mitigate the influence of unconscious biases on workplace relationships and business operations, the first step is to provide comprehensive education and foster awareness among all personnel within the organisation. This includes members of the Board of Directors, C-suite executives, Heads of Departments, Reporting Officers, HR professionals (especially those involved in recruitment), and rank-and-file employees. It is essential to engage the Human Resources team, especially those involved in talent acquisition and recruitment processes.

Ideally, if resources permit, it is proposed that the organisation conduct an extensive workshop for all staff, addressing the TKI model and issues related to unconscious bias. Participation in TKI assessments and workshops on unconscious biases enables each employee to gain insight into their conflict management style and understand how unconscious biases may influence their workplace interactions.

In scenarios where resources are constrained, disseminating information on unconscious bias and its effects through the organisation's communication platforms remains feasible. Suitable channels include mass emails, digital bulletin boards, the intranet, computer device screensavers, and traditional media (such as posters).

To ensure optimal impact and effectiveness, communications across all channels should be clear, consistent and empathetic; but firm yet open-minded and never overbearing. While the core message will remain uniform, content can be tailored to the needs of specific audiences, with separate messaging strategies for the board, senior leaders, middle managers, HR professionals, and other staff members.

4.2 Tailoring Awareness Messages

To ensure optimal impact, awareness communications and the objectives of all proposed activities should be customised to address the concerns and responsibilities of each target audience group:

- **Board of Directors and C-suite Executives:** Messages should focus on strategic leadership, emphasising the role of inclusive decision-making and the importance of setting a tone that values diversity and mitigates bias at all organisational levels.
- **Middle Managers and Reporting Officers:** Messaging can centre on fostering open team communication and recognising unconscious bias in everyday supervisory decisions and performance reviews.
- **HR and Recruiters:** Communications should highlight fair and unbiased HR practices, such as using structured interviews and standardised evaluation criteria to reduce affinity and confirmation biases.
- **Rank-and-File Employees:** Awareness efforts should encourage self-reflection and respectful engagement, providing practical tips for identifying and challenging personal biases in daily interactions.

Messages may be disseminated via multiple channels, such as mass emails, digital bulletin boards, intranet notifications, screensavers, and traditional media outlets. It is essential to maintain a consistent, empathetic and transparent approach across all platforms.

4.3 Measuring Effectiveness

To assess the impact of these initiatives, methods such as anonymous surveys and whistle-blowing channels, periodic open feedback sessions, regular manager check-ins and constant reminding should be implemented. These tools can help gauge changes in awareness, attitudes, and behaviours related to unconscious biases and conflict management. Comparing pre- and post-initiative results will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the education programme and highlight areas for further improvement.

5.0 A Comprehensive Strategic Communication Plan to Minimise Unconscious Biases at Workplace

5.1 Audience and Rationale

The communication plan addresses four separate groups of employees, each with a specific function in the implementation of the new strategy.

- **Senior Leadership:** This group, which includes the board of directors, C-suite executives (such as CEO, COO, CFO, CHRO, CIO), and director-level leaders, should be fully briefed to facilitate their endorsement. Their backing helps to communicate that this is an organisation-wide focus rather than solely an HR initiative.
- **Middle Managers and Reporting Officers:** This group of department heads and people managers acts as an intermediary between senior management and employees. They are responsible for understanding and applying necessary knowledge and skills, including the TKI model, to guide their teams and manage routine workplace conflicts.
- **HR and Recruiters:** This group is instrumental in implementing the new policy and embedding it within organisational procedures, including employee relations and recruitment processes. A comprehensive understanding of the TKI model is essential for effectively managing formal complaints, mediating workplace disputes, and maintaining equitable and unbiased hiring practices.
- **Rank-and-File Employees:** It is essential for all employees to comprehend the new strategy to contribute meaningfully to the development of a healthier workplace. This plan seeks to empower staff members by providing them with opportunities to share their perspectives and equipping them with resources to manage conflicts effectively.

5.2 Differentiated Communication Objectives

The communication plan establishes clear objectives tailored to each audience segment, ensuring that messaging and calls to action are appropriately aligned with their respective roles and motivations for maximum effectiveness

- **For Senior Leadership:** The primary objective is to secure visible, strategic buy-in by framing the initiative as a critical business imperative with tangible benefits for both the company and its employees. Specifically, this approach is expected to improve talent attraction and retention rates, enhance employee engagement scores, and reduce compliance-related risks. By pursuing "Employer of Choice" status, the company aims to be recognised for offering an exceptional workplace culture, competitive benefits, and inclusive policies that consistently attract top

talent. Proactive compliance with Singapore's evolving employment legislations further safeguards the organisation against regulatory challenges. Reinforcing the commitment as a true Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) organisation means actively creating an environment where every employee feels valued, supported, and empowered to contribute, exemplified by transparent career progression, equal access to opportunities, and a culture of respect across all levels.

- **For Middle Managers and Reporting Officers:** The objective is to empower this group with practical skills to model and champion the new culture. This includes recognising the subtle influence of unconscious bias on employee relationships and taking conscious steps to avoid it, such as using structured interview questions during recruitment or participating in regular bias-awareness workshops. Managers are also encouraged to foster open and approachable communication, making themselves available for employees seeking assistance. By consistently demonstrating these behaviours, managers can foster greater trust and collaboration within their teams, leading to improved morale and performance.
- **For HR and Recruiters:** The objective is to embed the new framework into all core HR processes by implementing specific, actionable steps. HR will utilise standardised interview questions and conduct anonymised CV reviews to minimise unconscious bias during candidate selection and interviews. Recruiters will also undergo dedicated training on recognising and mitigating unconscious bias as part of the framework rollout. To ensure these practices are effective and sustained, regular audits and feedback sessions will be held, monitoring alignment with the framework and upholding fairness and neutrality throughout the recruitment process.
- **For Rank-and-File Employees:** The objective is to empower every individual to contribute to a positive workplace culture, where everyone feels valued and supported. The plan aims to foster a strong sense of psychological safety, build a harmonious and warm environment, and equip employees with practical tools to proactively resolve conflicts with colleagues. To put these goals into practice, employees will participate in regular team-building workshops and receive training on conflict resolution techniques. Monthly open forums will be held, encouraging everyone to share ideas and voice concerns in a safe and inclusive space. By actively engaging in these initiatives, every employee will be better prepared to contribute to a respectful and collaborative workplace.

5.3 Rationale for Differentiated Objectives

Each objective for the plan is meticulously designed to address the distinct requirements and overcome the challenges encountered by each audience group, thereby supporting its overall effectiveness.

- **Senior Leadership:** This group prioritises strategic outcomes. Positioning the initiative in terms of business branding, such as aiming for recognition as a leading "Employer of Choice" in Singapore, legal compliance, and a robust DEI reputation supports the case for substantial investment. Research from Personio indicates that organisations investing in employee well-being and engagement are more likely to retain staff over extended periods (Personio, 2024). In addition, Gallup's study demonstrates that companies identified as Employers of Choice, with engaged employees, achieve a 21% increase in productivity (Gallup Inc, 2025). Establishing an organisational culture rooted in motivation, fair compensation, recognition, accountability, and rewards is essential for attracting talent and achieving operational objectives (Indeed, 2025). Moreover, a credible DEI reputation enhances employer branding and is linked to greater employee retention and superior business performance. This evidence-based strategy directly aligns with senior leadership priorities and is instrumental for obtaining executive support.
- **Middle Managers and Reporting Officers:** Serving as the primary point of contact for employee relations, this group is responsible for translating theoretical insights on unconscious bias into practical behavioural improvements. To facilitate this, middle managers will engage TKI workshops, role-playing scenarios, to identify and address bias in real-world contexts, participate in regular feedback sessions for ongoing self-assessment, and utilise structured checklists to promote fairness and consistency in decision-making. Through the adoption of these targeted practices, middle managers are equipped to be effective and empathetic leaders. Such leadership cultivates trust and open communication, resulting in higher team morale and improved conflict resolution. This pragmatic approach not only mitigates scepticism but also illustrates the tangible advantages of constructive conflict management and inclusive leadership.
- **HR and Recruiters:** As the gatekeepers of the organisation's talent, their integrity is paramount. The objective of neutrality addresses a key area of potential unconscious bias: the hiring process. To uphold this standard, HR and recruiters will be using standardised interview questions and implement blind resume screening to help reduce the influence of unconscious bias. By reinforcing these practices, the plan ensures that the commitment to a fair and inclusive workplace is consistent from the first point of contact with a potential employee. This approach not only broadens the talent pool but also fosters a culture of trust and belonging among all employees.

- **Rank-and-File Employees:** For this group, the objective is to build a foundation of trust by prioritising psychological safety, harmony, and warmth in the workplace. This commitment will be brought to life through regular team check-ins, the introduction of anonymous feedback channels where employees can safely share concerns, and recognition programmes that celebrate collaborative efforts and positive contributions. These initiatives are designed to not only address employee concerns but to empower everyone to actively shape a respectful and inclusive culture. As one employee shared, “I hope that with these new changes, I will feel more comfortable speaking up and know that my voice truly matters.” By tapping into these aspirations and providing practical avenues for engagement, the plan seeks to overcome fears of reprisal and encourage genuine participation in embracing the new framework.

5.4 Key Messages

The core messages are thoughtfully developed to align with the specific concerns and priorities of each target audience group.

- **Message for Senior Leadership:** "This initiative is a strategic investment in our brand. By fostering an inclusive culture and promoting genuine Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) principles, we are positioning ourselves as a leading 'Employer of Choice' in Singapore and ensuring we are ahead of future legislations. This commitment is about building a sustainable and resilient business for the future."
- **Message for Middle Managers and Reporting Officers:** "Your role is to lead with awareness. We are providing you with the tools to recognise the influence of unconscious bias on your relationships with employees. We ask you to make a conscious effort to avoid these biases and to always remain open to your team approaching you for guidance and support."
- **Message for HR and Recruiters:** "Your role is to champion fairness and neutrality. In every selection and interview, you are the first point of contact for our future talent. It is your responsibility to ensure that our processes are free from bias and that every candidate is evaluated solely on their skills and merits."
- **Message for Rank-and-File Employees:** "Every one of us has the power to shape our culture. We are committed to building a workplace that is psychologically safe, harmonious, and warm for everyone. This is a shared journey, and we are giving you the tools to help us build a community where every voice is respected and valued."

5.5 Types of Engagement

This communication plan aims to effectively engage each audience group by addressing their specific roles and requirements in a relevant and meaningful manner.

- **Senior Leadership:** Engagement at this level is both **intellectual** and related to **leadership** responsibilities. Senior leaders are involved intellectually by receiving data-driven briefings that clearly relate the initiative to critical business outcomes such as productivity and retention. Their participation also exemplifies leadership, as their visible support and endorsement help establish the cultural direction for the organisation.
- **Middle Managers and Reporting Officers:** This group engages through intellectual, behavioural, and leadership activities. They develop **intellectual** engagement by learning the theory and rationale of the TKI model. The required workshop offers opportunities for **behavioural** engagement, allowing practice of new skills. By coaching their teams and demonstrating these behaviours, they participate in **leadership** engagement, which contributes to the implementation of the plan.
- **HR and Recruiters:** This group is engaged on both **intellectual** and cultural levels. They participate in comprehensive training sessions focused on the TKI framework and contribute to updating formal company policies. Their primary role, however, is **cultural**: they are tasked with integrating new conflict resolution methods into the organisation's foundation, influencing practices ranging from recruitment to employee relations.
- **Rank-and-File Employees:** Engagement for this group occurs on **emotional**, intellectual, and social levels. Emotionally, employees are engaged when they perceive that the organisation prioritises their psychological safety and well-being. The e-learning module and accompanying resources serve to foster **intellectual** engagement by equipping them with the knowledge necessary to effectively manage conflicts. Additionally, the plan promotes **social** engagement by encouraging the application of the TKI model in daily workplace interactions, thereby cultivating a more respectful and collaborative environment.

5.6 Communication Barriers Hindering Engagement and Solutions

Identifying and addressing possible communication barriers is important for the implementation of the plan. This section explains how the suggested engagement strategies are designed to respond to specific communication challenges and contribute to achieving the proposed solutions in the plan.

Table 5-6-1: Table showing the relationships between engagements, communication barriers and solutions

Audience Group	Types of Engagement	Communication Barrier	Solution
Senior Leadership	Intellectual, Leadership	Time constraints	Data-driven briefings offer clear, essential information that encourages support and enables leadership involvement and endorsement.
Middle Managers and Reporting Officers	Intellectual, Behavioural, Leadership	Scepticism, resistance to change, added responsibility	Focusing on practical benefits reduces scepticism. Mandatory workshops boost engagement and help overcome resistance, while monthly leadership debriefs support adoption of new effective practices.
HR and Recruiters	Intellectual, Cultural	Information overload, perceived increased administrative work	Specialised training plays a critical role in ensuring individuals comprehend the new framework. Supplying clear guidance materials and emphasising how the framework enhances operational efficiency facilitates effective cultural engagement and helps minimise administrative workload.
Rank-and-File Employees	Emotional, Intellectual, Social	Scepticism, fear of retaliation, lack of trust	Initiatives such as leadership endorsement and anonymous feedback mechanisms help overcome emotional barriers. Intellectual engagement via e-learning equips individuals with essential skills and information, which can be utilised in everyday interactions to foster social involvement.

5.7 Roles and Responsibilities

Effective implementation of this plan depends on establishing well-defined roles and responsibilities among all relevant teams and individuals. Table 5-7-1 lists down the proposed roles, persons involved and the respective responsibilities involved in the initiative.

Table 5-7-1: Table listing the roles and responsibilities of various team members involved in the initiative

Role	Persons Involved	Responsibilities
Steering Committee	Senior Leadership, HR Lead	Provide final approval on the plan and budget. Act as visible champions for the initiative during launch and throughout its implementation. Address major organisational barriers and resource requests.
Project Lead	HR Manager	Draft the communication plan, manage timelines, and coordinate with all involved teams. Report on progress and feedback to the Steering Committee. Ensure all elements of the plan are executed on schedule.
Content Creation Team	HR Specialists, L&D Team	Craft key messages and all-hands presentation content. Develop workshop materials and the interactive e-learning module. Design and write content for the intranet portal and newsletters.
Execution Team	Middle Managers, HR Business Partners	Deliver the plan's content to the wider audience. Act as the primary point of contact for employees' questions. Collect initial, anecdotal feedback and escalate to the Project Lead as needed.
Feedback Collection Team	HR Analysts	Design and distribute feedback surveys. Organise and conduct focus groups. Analyse feedback data and prepare reports for the Project Lead and Steering Committee.

5.8 Communication Tools and Channels

The communication tools and channels have been carefully selected to maximise impact. To ensure effective execution, certain support, skills, and training are required.

Table 5-7-1: Table listing the proposed communication tools and channels used for the initiative

Tool / Channel	Purpose	Support & Skills Needed
Dedicated Briefing Session	To secure buy-in and demonstrate leadership commitment from the highest level.	High-quality, data-driven presentation materials. The presenter (Project Lead or HR Lead) must possess strong public speaking and persuasive skills to frame the initiative in a compelling business context.
Mandatory Half-Day Workshop	To provide Middle Managers and Reporting Officers with the practical, hands-on skills needed to apply the TKI model.	A certified TKI trainer or a trained internal facilitator is essential. The facilitator must be skilled in managing group dynamics, role-playing, and handling difficult questions.
Interactive E-Learning Module	To provide all employees with flexible, self-paced learning on unconscious bias and the TKI framework.	Access to a modern Learning Management System (LMS) or a suitable web-based platform. The Content Creation Team needs strong instructional design skills to make the module engaging and effective.
Intranet Portal with Resources	To serve as a centralised, accessible resource hub for all employees to refer to at any time.	A dedicated team member to keep the content up-to-date and respond to queries. The platform should be easy to navigate, with a clear search function.

5.9 Required Resources and Budget

A successful communication plan requires a realistic budget and dedicated resources. Table C-2 is the proposed budget breakdown for a mid-sized company of 200 employees (including senior leaders) in Singapore, which can be scaled up or down as needed.

The total estimated budget for the project is S\$20,350. The highest expenditure item is external training, accounting for S\$10,000, which covers the cost of a certified TKI trainer for manager workshops. For a mid-size company with 200 employees, including senior leaders, the average cost per employee is approximately S\$101.75.

Please refer to Table C-2 in Appendix C for the detailed breakdown of costs and resources.

5.10 Approval Process Timeline

To ensure the plan has the necessary organisational support, a formal approval process is required. This timeline outlines the sequence of events.

Phase 1: Plan Development & Submission

- **Action:** The Project Lead drafts the detailed communication plan, including all key messages, a timeline, and a budget proposal.
- **Action:** The completed draft is submitted to the Steering Committee for initial review.

Phase 2: Review & Refinement

- **Action:** The Steering Committee reviews the draft and provides feedback on the content, strategy, and budget.
- **Action:** The Project Lead addresses any concerns and refines the plan, which may involve a second round of review.

Phase 3: Formal Approval

- **Action:** A final version of the plan is presented to the Steering Committee.
- **Action:** A formal approval document or email is signed off by all parties in agreement, authorising the project's execution and budget allocation.

Phase 4: Execution & Monitoring

- **Action:** The approved plan is officially communicated to all involved teams (HR, L&D, Middle Managers) to begin the implementation phase.
- **Action:** The Project Lead provides ongoing progress reports to the Steering Committee to monitor progress, address any roadblocks, and ensure the plan remains on track.

Phase 5: Feedback Collection (Regular Intervals)

- **Action:** The regular feedback (including ad hoc feedback) is collected by the Feedback Collection Team and analysed. Reports are prepared for the Project Lead and Steering Committee.
- **Action:** Focus group discussions are organised to solicit feedback from all levels of employees.

5.11 Internal Memo: Communication Strategy for New Initiative

Each audience group will receive messages relevant to their roles, with some groups receiving additional updates for alignment. Customised messages ensure that each target audience group understands how the initiative relates to their specific responsibilities.

- **Senior leadership:** They will receive communications tailored to their responsibilities and will also be briefed on the messages sent to other groups during their regular meetings to ensure alignment at the leadership level. Their email will focus on inviting them to a dedicated briefing session about the new conflict resolution framework, highlighting its potential to enhance engagement, reduce risk, and drive innovation. The session aims to secure leadership's visible support and endorsement for the initiative, underlining the importance of their role in driving organisational change.
- **Middle Managers and Reporting Officers:** This group will receive messages relevant to their own roles as well as those intended for HR & Recruiters and Rank-and-File employees, equipping them to support and reinforce the initiative across teams. Their communication outlines a mandatory, hands-on workshop designed to equip managers with practical conflict resolution skills using the TKI model. The message emphasises the managers' frontline role in fostering a respectful and inclusive workplace and encourages active participation through interactive learning and personalised action planning.
- **HR and Recruiters:** They will receive all message versions, keeping them fully informed and enabling them to support the broader communication effort across the organisation. Their email presents an invitation to an advanced training session focused on applying the TKI model to mediation, policy integration, and bias-free recruitment. It underscores HR's pivotal role in embedding the new framework into formal processes and supporting a culture of fairness and inclusion.

- **Rank-and-File Employees:** This group will be sent communications specifically tailored to them, ensuring the message is straightforward and directly applicable to their daily work. The message, in the form of company-wide announcement, introduces the conflict resolution framework and its foundation in the TKI model, encouraging all staff to engage with new e-learning resources and self-assessment tools. The communication seeks to foster a culture of trust, openness, and continuous feedback, making clear that every employee plays a part in shaping a positive workplace environment.

For complete email samples and electronic digital media (EDMs) samples, please refer to Section C-3 of Appendix C.

6.0 Conclusion: Personal Reflection

Differentiating between **unconscious bias** and **casual racism** is complex, as both often operate beneath the surface of everyday interactions. Unconscious bias involves deeply ingrained, automatic stereotypes and attitudes we hold about individuals or groups, often without realising it. For example, a hiring manager might unconsciously favour candidates who share their educational background or ethnicity, believing they are a “better fit” for the team, even if they do not intend to exclude others. In contrast, casual racism typically appears as offhand remarks, jokes, or behaviours that reinforce racial stereotypes—sometimes masked as humour or tradition. For instance, making a joke about someone’s accent or assuming someone’s abilities based on their race may seem harmless to the speaker, but can be deeply offensive or alienating to the recipient.

The challenge lies in the fact that actions rooted in unconscious bias can easily cross the line into casual racism. A well-meaning comment, such as complimenting a colleague’s English because one assumes it is not their first language, might be intended as friendly, but may unintentionally reinforce stereotypes about linguistic ability and origin. This illustrates how the intent behind a remark, even when benign, does not lessen its potential to cause harm. **It is important to recognise that both unconscious bias and casual racism can have significant impact on those affected, perpetuating negative stereotypes and undermining efforts toward inclusivity.** By being mindful of our language and actions, and considering both intent and impact, we can help create a more respectful and inclusive environment for everyone.

Namewee’s and Viswa Sadasivan’s perspectives demonstrate that the line between casual racism and unconscious bias is often unclear, as the meaning and impact of certain terms depend heavily on cultural context and the recipient’s feelings. Words that may seem neutral or harmless to some can be deeply offensive to others, and whether language is considered casually racist or merely a product of unconscious bias is often

determined by how it is received and interpreted, not just by the speaker's intent (Namewee, 2025) (Singapore News Network, 2021).

Namewee's discussion of terms like "*Keling*" and "*Huan kia*" in Malaysia highlights how words, through cultural transmission and prolonged usage within a community, can lose their original derogatory sting for some speakers. However, as he wisely points out, if the other person feels offended, it is best to avoid them. This directly supports the idea that **casual racism depends significantly on culture and the recipient's receptiveness of the words used**. What might be a neutral term in one cultural context, or even among certain groups within a culture, can be deeply offensive in another, or to an individual with a different lived experience. The Malaysian context, with its rich tapestry of languages and historical interactions, provides a prime example of this linguistic and cultural fluidity.

Viswa Sadasivan's perspective from Singapore further reinforces this point. His argument that the negative value of terms like "mama" or "bhai" is "imputed" by individuals suggests that the receiver's interpretation and emotional response are paramount in defining whether a term constitutes casual racism. He acknowledges that some stereotypes might have a "truth to it" but crucially differentiates this from using such stereotypes to intentionally offend or discriminate. The shift in societal perception, leading to hypersensitivity about certain terms, underscores how cultural norms around acceptable language evolve. **What was once considered a harmless joke among a group might now be viewed as insensitive or racist by a broader, more diverse society.**

Ultimately, both videos converge on a critical insight: while the speaker's intent matters, the impact of their words on the recipient is equally, if not more, important. This emphasises the role of empathy and cultural awareness in navigating conversations around race and identity. As solo professionals in Singapore, understanding these nuances is crucial for fostering inclusive communication and interactions within a diverse society. It reminds us to be mindful of our language and to prioritise the comfort and respect of others, recognising that the line between unconscious bias and casual racism is often drawn by the individual on the receiving end.

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Appendix A: Key Unconscious Biases and their Impact in the Singapore Workplace

Table A-1 provides a concise overview of how unconscious biases manifest within the Singapore workplace and the significant harm they can cause. It details several key biases, including affinity bias, which favours individuals with similar backgrounds, and confirmation bias, which seeks to validate pre-existing beliefs. The data highlights a particularly high prevalence of discrimination related to race and age in Singapore, with one in three employees reporting they experienced bias in 2024 (Tilo, 2025); this is a rate higher than the Asia-Pacific average. These biases are not mere abstract concepts; they lead to tangible negative outcomes for organisations, such as homogeneity in teams, stifled innovation, and increased employee turnover. The summary underscores that addressing these biases is a critical step towards fostering a more equitable and productive work environment.

Type of Unconscious Bias	How it Manifests	Level of Prevalence in Singapore	Harm to the Organisation
Affinity Bias	Favouring candidates or colleagues who share a similar background (e.g., same university, culture, or hobbies) during hiring, promotions, or project assignments. Often presented as "hiring for culture fit."	Widespread, but often subtle and difficult to identify, as it is a common cognitive shortcut in hiring and informal networking.	Homogeneity: Leads to a lack of diversity of thought and experience. Stifled Innovation: Limits creativity and problem-solving by reinforcing a single way of thinking. Talent Loss: Prevents the organisation from accessing and leveraging a broad talent pool.

Type of Unconscious Bias	How it Manifests	Level of Prevalence in Singapore	Harm to the Organisation
Racial and Name Bias	Making assumptions about a candidate's qualifications or a colleague's capabilities based on their race or an ethnic-sounding name. Casual Racism: Subtle, everyday discriminatory comments or jokes that normalize stereotypes.	Very High: A 2022 survey by AWARE found that 89% of minority race persons experienced discrimination, and race was the top reason cited. Pervasive: A 2022 IPS report found that approximately one-fifth of minority-race residents reported unfair treatment at work due to race, often in the form of subtle "casual racism."	Damaged Psychological Safety: Creates an environment of exclusion and fear for employees from minority groups. Eroded Trust: Undermines employee morale, engagement, and a sense of belonging. Increased Turnover: Contributes to a higher rate of turnover among affected employees, who are more likely to seek a new job.
Gender Bias	Unconscious preference for one gender over another or stereotyping certain roles or behaviours as "masculine" or "feminine" (e.g., assuming a male candidate is more suited for a leadership role or a woman is less ambitious).	High: AWARE's 2022 survey found that 58% of women and 53% of men experienced bias in the workplace. Gender was the third most cited reason for discrimination, at 23%.	Gender Pay Gap: Perpetuates unequal compensation for equal work. Missed Opportunities: Limits opportunities for career advancement for one gender, creating a glass ceiling for female employees. Reduced Innovation: Prevents the organisation from harnessing the full potential of its female talent pool.

Type of Unconscious Bias	How it Manifests	Level of Prevalence in Singapore	Harm to the Organisation
Ageism	Stereotyping or discriminating against individuals based on their age, most commonly impacting older workers. Assumptions that older workers are less tech-savvy or less adaptable to change.	Common: The ADP People at Work 2024 report found that younger workers (18-34) were more likely to report discrimination (23%) than those aged 55-64 (11%), indicating age is a factor. Age was the second most common ground for discrimination, at 35%, in the AWARE survey.	Loss of Expertise: Organisations miss out on the valuable experience, institutional knowledge, and mentorship that older workers provide. Stifled Growth: Younger workers may be passed over for promotions if they are perceived as too inexperienced, regardless of their skills and accomplishments. Decreased Morale: Creates a sense of being undervalued or irrelevant among older employees, leading to disengagement and high turnover.
Halo/Horns Effect	The "halo effect" occurs when a single positive trait (e.g., attending a prestigious university) creates an overly positive overall impression of a person. The "horns effect" is the opposite: a single negative trait (e.g., a gap in employment) creates an	Pervasive: These are common cognitive shortcuts that affect judgment and are particularly evident in subjective, unstructured hiring and performance review processes.	Suboptimal Hiring: Leads to hiring candidates who may not be the most qualified but who made a strong first impression, while overlooking better-suited candidates. Unfair Evaluations: Skews performance reviews and promotion decisions, leading to unfair outcomes and a breakdown of trust.

Type of Unconscious Bias	How it Manifests	Level of Prevalence in Singapore	Harm to the Organisation
	unfairly negative overall judgment.		Erosion of Meritocracy: A company's values are undermined when decisions are based on subjective feelings rather than objective, merit-based criteria.
Confirmation Bias	The unconscious tendency to seek out and favour information that confirms pre-existing beliefs while ignoring contrary evidence.	Common: Often occurs during interviews, where a hiring manager with a positive first impression may only ask questions that validate their initial gut feeling about a candidate.	Ineffective Decision-Making: Leads to poor judgment in hiring, promotions, and project allocation. Reinforced Stereotypes: Perpetuates existing biases by actively seeking out information that confirms them. Missed Opportunities: The organisation fails to gain new insights and perspectives from individuals who challenge existing norms.

Table A-1: Key Unconscious Biases in the Singapore Workplace: Manifestations, Prevalence, and Organisational Impact

Appendix B: Mini Report on Unconscious Bias in the Singapore Workplace: A Strategic Imperative for Leaders

Executive Summary: The Imperative of Inclusion in Singapore

This mini report presents an analysis of unconscious bias in Singapore's professional environment, addressing its relevance as both a social and business concern. Unconscious biases are cognitive processes that influence perceptions and decisions without conscious awareness. Although Singapore is recognised as a global centre for talent with a multicultural workforce, data indicates that workplace discrimination continues to occur.

Key findings show that one in three Singaporean employees reported experiencing bias in 2024, which is higher than the Asia-Pacific average. This bias occurs throughout the employee lifecycle, including hiring decisions affected by factors such as names and physical appearance, as well as unequal opportunities in daily operations, such as microaggressions and performance reviews. These issues are associated with reduced innovation, lower productivity, increased employee turnover, and potential reputational and legal risks (Tilo, 2025; Ganesh, 2025).

The report offers a two-part guide for managers: use structured, unbiased recruitment methods like blind resume screening and diverse hiring panels, and create daily practices that boost psychological safety, fair evaluations, and leadership self-awareness. Addressing unconscious bias requires ongoing, systemic action to build an equitable, high-performing organisation in Singapore (Carnahan & Moore, 2023; Spelman College, 2025; Forbes, 2024; Infopro Learning, 2023).

B1 Introduction: The Unseen Force in Singapore's Workplace

B1.1 Decoding Unconscious Bias

Unconscious bias, also known as implicit bias, refers to attitudes or stereotypes that influence an individual's understanding, actions, and decisions at a subconscious level. Unlike explicit prejudice, these biases occur unintentionally and are shaped by previous experiences, cultural background, and societal norms. The brain utilises such cognitive shortcuts to facilitate rapid judgment and information categorisation within complex environments. Historically, this process aided survival by enabling quick assessments of safety; however, in contemporary, diverse workplaces, these ingrained biases present substantial challenges. Due to their origin as evolutionary mechanisms, unconscious biases are particularly resistant to change and require intentional, ongoing strategies to effectively reduce their impact (Spelman College, 2025) (Reiners, 2025) (Learnlight, 2024).

B1.2 Why Singapore, and Why Now?

Singapore functions as a major global financial and talent hub, making awareness of unconscious bias important. The city-state's workplaces consist of various nationalities and cultures, creating a diverse environment that can influence workplace dynamics in different ways. For companies operating in this context, leveraging diversity requires intentional strategies to support effective collaboration (Lordan & Siddiqi, 2021) (Fion, 2024).

Recent laws and social changes have made action more urgent. Singapore's Workplace Fairness Bill has raised anti-discrimination standards, making bias a legal and strategic issue, not just a moral one. Organisations now need to proactively integrate inclusion throughout their operations (Tilo, 2025).

B2 A Taxonomy of Unconscious Biases During Hiring and in Daily Work

B2.1 Social & Affinity Biases

Unconscious biases during hiring and in daily work can be grouped into three main types: Social & Affinity, Identity & Stereotype, and Cognitive & Judgment biases (Reiners, 2025; Learnlight, 2024; Smith & Staff Writers, 2024; Diard, 2024; Team Asana, 2025; Spelman College, 2025).

Bias Type	Description	Example in Hiring	Example in Daily Work
Affinity Bias (Similarity Bias)	Innate tendency to favour people with similar backgrounds, interests, or experiences	Recruiter favours candidate who attended same university or shares a similar hobby, even if a more qualified candidate is available	Manager assigns high-visibility project to colleague with whom they share a gender-specific experience, disadvantaging others
Confirmation Bias	Seeking out information that confirms pre-existing views while ignoring contradictory evidence	Hiring manager forms positive impression and asks questions to confirm it, overlooking signs of weakness	Manager looks for evidence confirming preconceived notion about employee's work ethic, leading to unfair review
Attribution Bias	Distortion in interpreting own actions vs. actions of others	Individuals attribute own successes to personal qualities and failures to external factors; view others' successes as luck and errors as personal flaws	Leads to inaccurate conclusions and unfair judgments in performance assessments and team collaboration

Table B2-1-1: Table indicating the type of bias, examples in hiring and in daily work

B2.2 Identity & Stereotype Biases

Bias Type	Description	Example/Study	Impact
Gender Bias	Unconscious bias favouring one gender or attaching stereotypes to gender expressions	Panel favors male candidate over equally qualified female candidate; 2015 Pew Research Centre survey: 40% believed double standards for women seeking C-suite roles	Perpetuates gender pay gap; reduces job and career advancement opportunities
Racial and Name Bias	Assumptions or negative feelings about a person based on race; name bias prevalent in recruitment	MIT & University of Chicago study: "typically white" names received 50% more callbacks than equally or more skilled black candidates; Harris Poll in Singapore: 33% of people of colour experienced discrimination due to names	Negative impact on diversity hiring; companies miss out on valuable talent
Ageism	Stereotyping or discriminating based on age, disproportionately affecting older workers	Older team member passed over for promotion in favour of younger, less experienced one; assumption that older workers are less comfortable with technology or resistant to new skills	Experience of older workers undervalued
Beauty Bias (Attractiveness Bias)	Assumption that more attractive individuals are more qualified or competent	Study: blond women's salaries 7% higher than brunettes or redheads; "mature faced" people had career advantage over "baby-faced" people	Unfair or favoured treatment in the workplace

Table B2-2-1: Table indicating the type of bias, examples and impact to workplace

B2.3 Cognitive & Judgment Biases

Bias/Effect	Description	Example
Halo Effect	Single positive characteristic creates an overly favourable overall impression, overshadowing other factors	Attending a prestigious university leads to a favourable impression
Horns Effect	Single negative trait or mistake leads to an unfairly negative judgment that clouds overall abilities	Employment gap leads to negative judgment
Anchor Bias	Individual relies too heavily on the first piece of information received when making a decision	Recruiter anchors to first applicant's salary request
Contrast Effect	Unconscious comparison of multiple subjects or individuals, leading to skewed judgments	Hiring manager compares candidate to the one just interviewed

Table B2-3-1: Table indicating the type of bias and examples at workplace

B3 The State of Play: Unconscious Bias in Singapore's Corporate Landscape

B3.1 Prevalence and Key Statistics

Recent data highlights the ongoing issue of workplace discrimination and bias in Singapore. The ADP People at Work report indicates that in 2024, one in three employees in Singapore reported experiencing bias, an increase to 33% from 25% in 2023. This figure is notably higher than the Asia-Pacific regional average of 19% (Tilo, 2025).

A 2022 survey by AWARE and Milieu Insight reported that 55% of workers experienced discrimination in the past five years, indicating that workplace bias is widespread (AWARE, 2022).

The increase in reported cases from 2023 to 2024 may be viewed in different ways. The ADP report notes that Singapore's Workplace Fairness Bill aims to reduce discrimination. A separate survey by foundit (formerly Monster APAC & ME) reported that 52% of respondents believe their organisations are responsive to diversity feedback. These observations indicate that the rise in reported incidents could reflect greater awareness and increased willingness among employees to report incidents, rather than an actual increase in discriminatory acts. This development suggests changes in attitudes toward inclusion within corporate environments (Tilo, 2025; Staffing Industry Analysts, 2024).

The statistics provide a detailed breakdown of who is most affected (Tilo, 2025; Staffing Industry Analysts, 2024):

Category	Group	Percentage Experienced Discrimination	Discrimination Ground Cited (%)
Ethnicity	Minority race persons	89%	Race (41%)
	Majority race persons	44%	Race (41%)
Age	Workers aged 18 to 34	23%	Age (35%)
	Workers aged 55 to 64	11%	Age (35%)
Gender	Women	58%	Gender (23%)
	Men	53%	Gender (23%)
Other Vulnerable Groups	Persons with disabilities	78%	
	LGBTQ persons	68%	

Table B3-1-1: Table indicating the groups of workers most affected by workplace unconscious biases

Report Source	Year	Overall Prevalence	Prevalence by Ethnicity	Prevalence by Age	Prevalence by Gender
ADP People at Work	2024	33% (up from 25% in 2023)	55% of ethnic minorities	23% (18-34) vs. 11% (55-64)	27% of women, 34% of men
AWARE/Milieu Insight	2022	55% over 5 years	89% of minorities vs. 44% of majority race	35% of respondents cited age as a reason	58% of women, 53% of men

Table B3-1-2: Table indicating percentages of respondents reporting of experiencing unconscious biases reported according to ethnicity, age and gender

B3.2 The Pervasiveness of "Casual Racism"

A 2022 Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) report found that about 20% of minority-race residents experienced workplace discrimination due to race. This subtle "casual racism" often appears as jokes or ignorance, such as using exclusive language or mocking non-native accents (Mathews & Tay, 2024).

Casual racism in Singapore is prevalent and often goes unnoticed, reflecting aspects of the nation's social structure. According to the IPS commentary, conformity and conflict avoidance are significant features of Singapore's society. As a result, employees may disregard or fail to report minor remarks to maintain harmony or due to concerns about being viewed as overly sensitive. Such under-reporting can lead to the continued presence of the issue and obscure its actual extent. Addressing this challenge requires efforts both to mitigate bias and reconsider societal norms that discourage individuals from raising concerns (Mathews & Tay, 2024).

B4 Manifestations of Bias: A Walk-Through of the Corporate Lifecycle

Unconscious bias is not a singular event; it is a pervasive force that can influence every stage of an employee's professional journey, from the initial application to daily interactions and career progression.

Table B4-1 is a table summarising common unconscious biases at hiring processes and workplace.

Stage / Operation	Type of Bias	Description / Example
Recruitment & Talent Acquisition		
Job Descriptions (Carnahan & Moore, 2023; SEEK, 2005)	Exclusionary Language	Unconsciously signals to certain groups that they are not a good fit. Examples include gendered words like "salesman" or requirements like "a degree from a top university."
Resume Screening (Team Asana, 2025; Smith & Staff Writers, 2024)	Name Bias	Candidates with non-Anglo sounding names are often at a disadvantage. A survey found that 33% of people of colour felt they experienced discrimination at work due to their name.
Interviews (Carnahan & Moore, 2023; Diard, 2024; Fischer, 2025; Smith & Staff Writers, 2024)	Unstructured Interview Biases (Halo effect, Affinity bias, First-impression errors, Confirmation bias)	Unstructured interviews lack a consistent evaluation framework, making them susceptible to biases. A prestigious degree or shared hobbies can lead to unfair assessments.
Video Interviews	Home Background Bias	A hiring manager's judgment can be unconsciously influenced by the candidate's home environment or background, which is unrelated to their professional abilities.

Stage / Operation	Type of Bias	Description / Example
Daily Workplace Operations		
Performance Reviews and Promotions (Diard, 2024; Learnlight, 2024; Smith & Staff Writers, 2024; Learnlight, 2024; Mathews & Tay, 2024)	Mentorship / Advancement Bias	A manager may hesitate to mentor or advance a minority subordinate based on an unconscious belief that they might not "fit" into a higher role or corporate culture.
Project and Task Allocation (Diard, 2024)	Unequal Distribution of Work	Leads to certain employees being assigned less challenging or visible tasks, which hinders their professional development and limits the organisation's ability to leverage its full talent pool.
Informal Networks and Microaggressions (Diard, 2024; Mathews & Tay, 2024; Atana, 2024)	Exclusion and Microaggressions	Exclusion from crucial informal networks and after-work events. Microaggressions, such as "where are you from originally?", can cause heightened stress and a diminished sense of belonging.

Table B4-1: Table summarising common unconscious biases at hiring processes and workplace

B5 The High Cost of Complacency: Organisational Harm

Neglecting to address unconscious bias can result in substantial negative consequences, impacting both individual employees and the overall performance and sustainability of the organisation.

B5.1 Impact on Employees and Culture

Issue	Impact on Employees	Impact on Organisation	Supporting Sources
Unconscious bias	Creates unfairness, erodes morale, reduces psychological safety, causes stress and anxiety, lowers well-being and job satisfaction	Diminishes team cohesion and performance	Ganesh, 2025; Mathews & Tay, 2024
Discrimination	Leads to increased turnover, employees actively look for new jobs, quitting jobs, undermined trust	Loss of talent, damages reputation, harder to attract diverse workforce, hinders innovation, loss of competitiveness	ADP and AWARE/Milieu surveys; Tilo, 2025; AWARE, 2022; Reiners, 2025; Ganesh, 2025

Table B5-1: Table summarising common unconscious biases impact on employees and culture

B5.2 Impact on Business Performance

Business Consequence	Description	Source
Effect on Innovation and Creativity	Bias limits diversity of thought, stifles innovative solutions, excludes alternative viewpoints, homogenous teams struggle to adapt and evolve	Ganesh, 2025
Impact on Productivity and Decision-Making	Workers experiencing discrimination more likely in "low-productivity category", effect consistent regardless of gender, age, or racial background, bias skews judgment in hiring, promotions, performance evaluations	Tilo, 2025; Carnahan & Moore, 2023; Ganesh, 2025
Reputational and Legal Risks	Absence of proactive approach exposes organisation to legal risk, Singapore's Workplace Fairness Bill confirms employment discrimination is a legal risk, complaint or lawsuit can inflict severe brand damage	Tilo, 2025; Ganesh, 2025

Table B5-2: Table summarising business consequences due to unconscious biases

B6 Preventing Bias in Recruitment and Daily Operations

Building a diverse and inclusive workforce involves shifting from using "culture fit" as a criterion to adopting a more data-driven "culture add" approach. This process includes making clear distinctions between personal rapport and objective qualifications (Infopro Learning, 2023).

Prevention in Recruitment	Prevention in Daily Operations
Adopt Structured Interviewing: Ask every candidate the same questions in the same order.	Cultivate Self-Awareness: Acknowledge and reflect on personal biases as a leader and manager.
Implement Blind Recruitment: Omit names and other identifying information from resumes.	Seek Feedback: Actively ask direct reports and peers for feedback on observed biases.
Diversify Hiring Panels: Use a diverse team of interviewers with different backgrounds and perspectives.	Standardize Performance Reviews: Use clear, objective metrics for all reviews and promotions, not personal feelings.
Use Inclusive Job Descriptions: Avoid exclusionary language and apply the "flip test" to review wording.	Promote Equitable Allocation: Ensure projects and opportunities are distributed based on merit, not favouritism.

Prevention in Recruitment	Prevention in Daily Operations
Incorporate Work Sample Tests: Assess candidates based on their skills and capability with objective assignments.	Foster Psychological Safety: Create an environment where employees feel safe to speak up without fear.

Table B6-1: Table illustrating how unconscious biases can be prevented during recruitment and daily operations (Carnahan & Moore, 2023; Forbes, 2024; Infopro Learning, 2023; Spelman College, 2025; Team Asana, 2025; Diard, 2024; Learnlight, 2024; SEEK, 2005)

Awareness by itself does not suffice. Companies based in Singapore, including GIC and Nestlé, have adopted approaches that extend beyond single training sessions to encompass principles-led strategies. These methods include proactive self-assessments, annual reviews monitored by HR, and ongoing training for managers. This approach incorporates equal opportunity practices into company culture and operations, aimed at establish a lasting and systematic framework rather than a short-term initiative (GIC Private Limited, 2025a) (GIC Private Limited, 2025b) (Nestlé Singapore, n.d.) (Infopro Learning, 2023).

B7 Conclusion and Future Outlook

This report's analysis demonstrates that unconscious bias is an important and increasingly prevalent issue within Singapore workplaces. The data regarding its frequency, its nuanced presence in everyday interactions and recruitment processes, as well as its documented negative impact on business performance and employee welfare, indicate that unconscious bias constitutes a significant strategic concern rather than a peripheral challenge.

"Casual racism" in Singapore is closely linked to social norms around conformity and avoiding conflict. Addressing it requires solutions that tackle these deeper issues, not just raise awareness. More reported incidents may signal growing psychological safety but also show the issue remains unresolved (Mathews & Tay, 2024).

A sustainable path requires more than one-off unconscious bias training; it needs a long-term, data-driven Diversity, Equity and Inclusive (DEI) strategy led by principles, leadership, and employee engagement. Following leading Singaporean organisations, embedding equitable practices in all aspects, from job descriptions to performance reviews, enables companies to foster an inclusive, innovative culture that fully utilises Singapore's diverse workforce (GIC Private Limited, 2025b; Nestlé Singapore, n.d.).

Annex C: Compendium of Information for Proposed Communication Plan

Table C-1: Objectives Statements for Communication Plan Segmented by Target Audience Group

Target Audience Group	Objectives of Communication Plan
Senior Leadership (Board of Directors, C-suite Executives)	Secure visible, strategic buy-in by framing initiative as a critical business imperative: • Improve Business Outcomes: Improve talent attraction and retention, enhance employee engagement, and reduce legal and compliance-related risks. • Achieve "Employer of Choice" Status: Pursue recognition as a company with an exceptional workplace culture that attracts top talent. • Ensure Proactive Compliance: Reinforce the organisation's commitment to proactive compliance with Singapore's evolving employment legislation, such as the Workplace Fairness Legislation (WFL). • Reinforce DEI Commitment: Actively create an environment where every employee feels valued, supported, and empowered through transparent career progression, equal opportunities, and a culture of respect.
Middle Managers and Reporting Officers	Empower managers with practical skills to model and champion new workplace culture: • Skill Development: Equip managers with the ability to recognise and counteract subtle influence of unconscious bias on employee relationships. • Adoption of Structured Practices: Encourage the use of structured interview questions during recruitment and participation in regular bias-awareness workshops. • Fostering Trust: Promote open communication and an approachable management style to build trust and collaboration within teams, which can lead to improved morale and performance.

HR and Recruiters	Embed new framework into all core HR processes by implementing specific actionable steps: • Bias Mitigation in Recruitment: Utilise standardised, competency-based interview questions and conduct anonymised CV / resume reviews to minimize unconscious bias during candidate selection. • Dedicated Training: Ensure recruiters undergo dedicated training on recognising and mitigating unconscious bias as part of the framework rollout. • Regular Audits: Hold regular audits and feedback sessions with managers to monitor alignment with the framework, ensuring fairness and neutrality are upheld throughout all HR processes especially during the recruitment process.
Rank-and-File Employees	Empower every individual to contribute to a positive workplace culture where everyone feels valued and supported: • Psychological Safety: Foster a strong sense of psychological safety, allowing employees to voice opinions without fear of repercussions. • Conflict Resolution: Equip employees with practical tools and training on conflict resolution techniques to proactively resolve disputes with colleagues. • Collaborative Environment: Encourage active participation in team-building workshops and monthly open forums to share ideas and concerns in a safe, inclusive space, fostering a respectful and collaborative workplace.

Table C-2: Estimated Project Budget Breakdown

Item	Estimated Cost (SGD)	Notes
Personnel Costs	\$5,000	Allocated time for the Project Lead and Content Creation Team. Based on internal hourly rates.
External Training	\$10,000	Cost of a certified TKI trainer for manager workshops. (This can be a significant cost.)
Technology & Tools	\$2,000	Subscription for a suitable e-learning platform and a survey tool for feedback collection.
Materials	\$1,000	Printing of workshop handouts, promotional posters, and other physical materials.
Event Costs	\$500	Venue rental and basic refreshments for the all-hands launch event.
Contingency	\$1,850	A 10% buffer to cover unforeseen costs.
Total Estimated Budget	\$20,350	This is a guideline and may vary based on internal resources and platform subscriptions.

C-3: This section provides specific content and messaging to be used for each audience group and communication channel.

For Senior Leadership

Email Invitation for Briefing Session

Subject: Briefing on New Conflict Resolution Framework & Business Impact

Hi [Senior Leader's Name],

You're invited to a briefing session about our new conflict resolution initiative, which addresses workplace conflicts and unconscious bias. We'll share data on how this framework enhances engagement, reduces risk, and improves collaboration.

Your support is crucial. Please confirm attendance by [date] so we can schedule accordingly.

Thank you,

[Project Lead's Name]

[Project Lead's Title]

Briefing Session Content Outline

- **Executive Summary:** A concise, one-page summary highlighting key findings from the conflict analysis and the business case for the new framework.
- **The TKI Model:** A high-level overview of the TKI model and its five modes, framed as a practical tool for leaders.
- **ROI and Metrics:** Key metrics to track success, such as a reduction in formal complaints, improved employee satisfaction scores, and higher retention rates in pilot teams.
- **Call to Action:** A clear request for visible leadership support through an all-hands launch message and an endorsement in internal communications.

For Middle Managers and Reporting Officers

Email for Mandatory Workshop

Subject: Your Role in Fostering a Respectful Workplace: A Hands-on Workshop on Conflict Resolution

Dear [Manager's Name],

In our ongoing commitment to fostering a collaborative and inclusive workplace, your leadership is essential. To further support this initiative, you are invited to participate in a half-day, interactive workshop focused on effective conflict resolution.

This session aims to equip you with practical strategies for managing conflicts constructively and enhancing team cohesion. The programme will incorporate the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI), providing guidance on applying its frameworks to challenging conversations and relationship building within your teams.

Your engagement is highly valued, and group sizes will be kept limited to ensure an interactive and personalised learning environment. To confirm your attendance, please use the registration link below:

[Registration Link]

We appreciate your commitment and look forward to your participation.

Best regards,

[HR Manager's Name]

[HR Manager's Title]

Workshop Content Outline

- **Introduction:** Why the new conflict resolution framework is vital for managers.
- **Identifying Your Conflict Style:** Participants will take a quick self-assessment to identify their default TKI mode.
- **Case Studies and Role-Playing:** Practical application of the TKI modes using real-world scenarios, including those from the training video.
- **Coaching Your Team:** A module on how to coach direct reports to use the TKI model to resolve their own conflicts.
- **Action Planning:** Each manager will create a personal action plan for applying the new skills in their teams.

For HR and Recruiters

Email for Specialised Training

Subject: Mastering the New Conflict Resolution Framework: An Advanced Session for HR Professionals

Hi [HR / Recruiter's Name],

Our new conflict resolution framework, based on the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI), is officially here. As an HR professional, your expertise is essential to its success.

This advanced training will provide you with a deeper understanding of the TKI model and its application in formal HR processes. We will cover:

- Utilising the TKI model for conflict mediation.
- Incorporating the framework within existing employee relations policies.
- Applying TKI principles during recruitment and onboarding to minimise unconscious bias.

Please RSVP by [date] to secure your spot.

We look forward to working together on this important project and achieving great results.

Sincerely,

[HR Manager's Name]

[HR Manager's Title]

Training Content Outline

- **Mediation Techniques:** Advanced facilitation skills for mediating disputes using the TKI model.
- **Policy Integration:** Updating internal policies and standard operating procedures to reflect the new framework.
- **Bias-Free Recruitment:** Strategies for applying the TKI model's principles to recruitment to ensure diverse and inclusive hiring.
- **Handling Escalated Conflicts:** A review of best practices for addressing complex, escalated conflicts using the new framework.

For Rank-and-File Employees

Company-Wide Announcement Email (English)

Subject: A New Chapter in Our Workplace Culture: Introducing Our Conflict Resolution Framework

Dear Team,

Every one of us has a part to play in creating a workplace where we feel safe, respected, and heard. Today, we are excited to introduce a new conflict resolution framework that will help us do just that.

This new framework is built on a simple but powerful tool called the **Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI)**. It provides a common language and a clear set of options for navigating disagreements constructively, whether they are big or small.

To get you started, we have launched a new interactive e-learning module on our intranet, accessible 24/7. This module will help you:

- Understand the five ways people approach conflict.
- Identify your own conflict style.
- Learn how to choose the best approach for any given situation.

We are committed to fostering a culture of trust and open communication. We will be providing more resources and opportunities for feedback in the coming weeks.

Thank you for your commitment to making our company a truly great place to work.

Warmly,

[Senior Leader's Name]

[Senior Leader's Title]

Company-Wide Announcement Email (Chinese, to check again before dissemination)

主题：职场文化新篇章：推出我们的冲突解决框架

亲爱的团队成员：

我们每个人都在营造一个安全、受尊重、被倾听的工作环境。今天，我们很高兴向大家介绍一个新的冲突解决框架，它将帮助我们实现这一目标。

这个新框架基于一个简单而有力的工具——托马斯-基尔曼冲突模式工具（TKI）。它为我们提供了一种通用语言和一套清晰的选项，帮助我们无论面对大小分歧，都能以建设性的方式应对。

为了帮助大家快速上手，我们已在公司内网推出了一个全新的互动式在线学习模块，全天 24 小时开放。通过该模块，您将能够：

- 了解人们处理冲突的五种方式；
- 识别自己的冲突应对风格；
- 学习如何为不同情境选择最佳应对策略。

我们致力于培养信任与开放沟通的文化。在接下来的几周内，我们将提供更多资源和反馈机会。

感谢各位致力于将我们的公司打造成真正卓越的工作场所。

此致问候！

[高级领导姓名]

[高级领导职务]

Company-Wide Announcement Email (Malay, to check again before dissemination)

Subjek: Babak Baharu dalam Budaya Tempat Kerja Kita: Memperkenalkan Rangka Kerja Penyelesaian Konflik

Kepada Pasukan,

Setiap seorang daripada kita memainkan peranan penting dalam mewujudkan tempat kerja di mana kita berasa selamat, dihormati, dan didengari. Hari ini, kami teruja untuk memperkenalkan rangka kerja penyelesaian konflik baharu yang akan membantu kita mencapai matlamat tersebut.

Rangka kerja baharu ini dibina berasaskan alat yang mudah tetapi berkuasa, iaitu Instrumen Mod Konflik Thomas-Kilmann (TKI). Ia menyediakan bahasa yang sama dan set pilihan yang jelas untuk mengendalikan perselisihan secara membina, sama ada ia besar atau kecil.

Untuk memulakan, kami telah melancarkan modul e-pembelajaran interaktif baharu di intranet kita, yang boleh diakses 24/7. Modul ini akan membantu anda untuk:

- Memahami lima cara individu mendekati konflik.
- Mengenal pasti gaya konflik peribadi anda.
- Mempelajari cara memilih pendekatan terbaik untuk sebarang situasi yang diberikan.

Kami komited untuk memupuk budaya kepercayaan dan komunikasi terbuka. Kami akan menyediakan lebih banyak sumber dan peluang untuk maklum balas dalam beberapa minggu akan datang.

Terima kasih atas komitmen anda dalam menjadikan syarikat kita tempat yang benar-benar hebat untuk bekerja.

Salam mesra,

[Nama Pemimpin Kanan]

[Jawatan Pemimpin Kanan]

Company-Wide Announcement Email (Tamil, to check again before dissemination)

தலைப்பு: நமது பணியிடப் பண்பாட்டில் ஒரு புதிய அத்தியாயம்: எங்கள் பிணக்குத் தீர்வுச் சட்டகத்தை அறிமுகப்படுத்துகிறோம்

அன்புள்ள குழுவினரே,

நாம் ஒவ்வொருவரும் பாதுகாப்பாகவும், மதிக்கப்படுவதாகவும், நம் குரல் கேட்கப்படுவதாகவும் உணரும் ஒரு பணியிடத்தை உருவாக்குவதில் பங்களிக்க வேண்டும். அதைச் செய்ய நமக்கு உதவும் ஒரு புதிய பிணக்குத் தீர்வுச் சட்டகத்தை அறிமுகப்படுத்துவதில் இன்று நாங்கள் மகிழ்ச்சியடைகிறோம்.

இந்தப் புதிய சட்டகம், Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) எனப்படும் ஒரு எளிய, ஆனால் சக்திவாய்ந்த கருவியின் அடிப்படையில் உருவாக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது. பெரியதாக இருந்தாலும் சரி, சிறியதாக இருந்தாலும் சரி, கருத்து வேறுபாடுகளைக் constructively கையாள இது ஒரு பொதுவான மொழியையும், தெளிவான விருப்பங்களையும் வழங்குகிறது.

நீங்கள் தொடங்குவதற்கு, எங்கள் அகஇணையதளத்தில் (intranet) ஒரு புதிய ஊடாடும் e-கற்றல் தொகுதியை (interactive e-learning module) தொடங்கியுள்ளோம். இதை 24/7 அணுகலாம். இந்தத் தொகுதி உங்களுக்கு உதவும்:

- மக்கள் மோதல்களை அணுகும் ஐந்து வழிகளைப் புரிந்துகொள்ள.
- உங்கள் சொந்த மோதல் பாணியை அடையாளம் காண.
- எந்த ஒரு குறிப்பிட்ட சூழ்நிலைக்கும் சிறந்த அணுகுமுறையை எவ்வாறு தேர்ந்தெடுப்பது என்பதை அறிய.

நம்பிக்கை மற்றும் திறந்த தொடர்பாடல் பண்பாட்டை வளர்ப்பதற்கு நாங்கள் உறுதியுடன் உள்ளோம். வரும் வாரங்களில் மேலும் பல வளங்களையும் கருத்துத் தெரிவிப்பதற்கான வாய்ப்புகளையும் வழங்குவோம்.

எங்கள் நிறுவனத்தை உண்மையிலேயே ஒரு சிறந்த பணியிடமாக மாற்றுவதற்கான உங்கள் அர்ப்பணிப்புக்கு நன்றி.

அன்புடன்,

[மூத்த தலைவரின் பெயர்]

[மூத்த தலைவரின் பதவி]

E-Learning Module and Intranet Content Outline

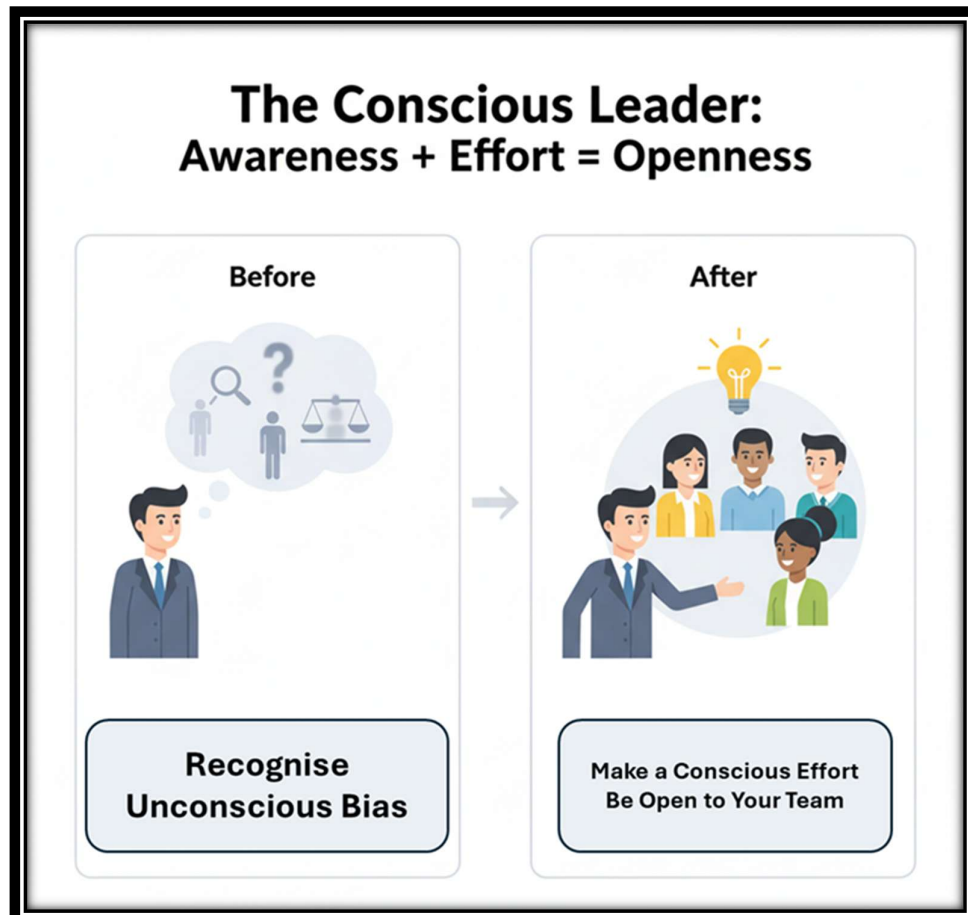
- **Module 1: Understanding Unconscious Bias:** An introductory video with real-world examples (including from the training video) to help employees recognise their own biases.
 - **Module 2: The TKI Model:** An interactive module explaining each of the five modes (Accommodating, Avoiding, Collaborating, Compromising, Competing) with quizzes and self-reflection exercises.
 - **Module 3: Scenarios & Solutions:** Practical exercises that allow employees to apply the TKI modes to different hypothetical workplace conflicts.
 - **Intranet Portal Resources:**
 - **TKI Quick Guide:** A one-page PDF to print and keep on their desk.
 - **FAQs:** Common questions about the framework and how to use it.
 - **Feedback Channel:** An anonymous form for employees to provide feedback on the initiative.
 - **Success Stories:** Testimonials and case studies of employees who have used the framework effectively.
-

C-4: EDMs – Publicity Posters (in English)

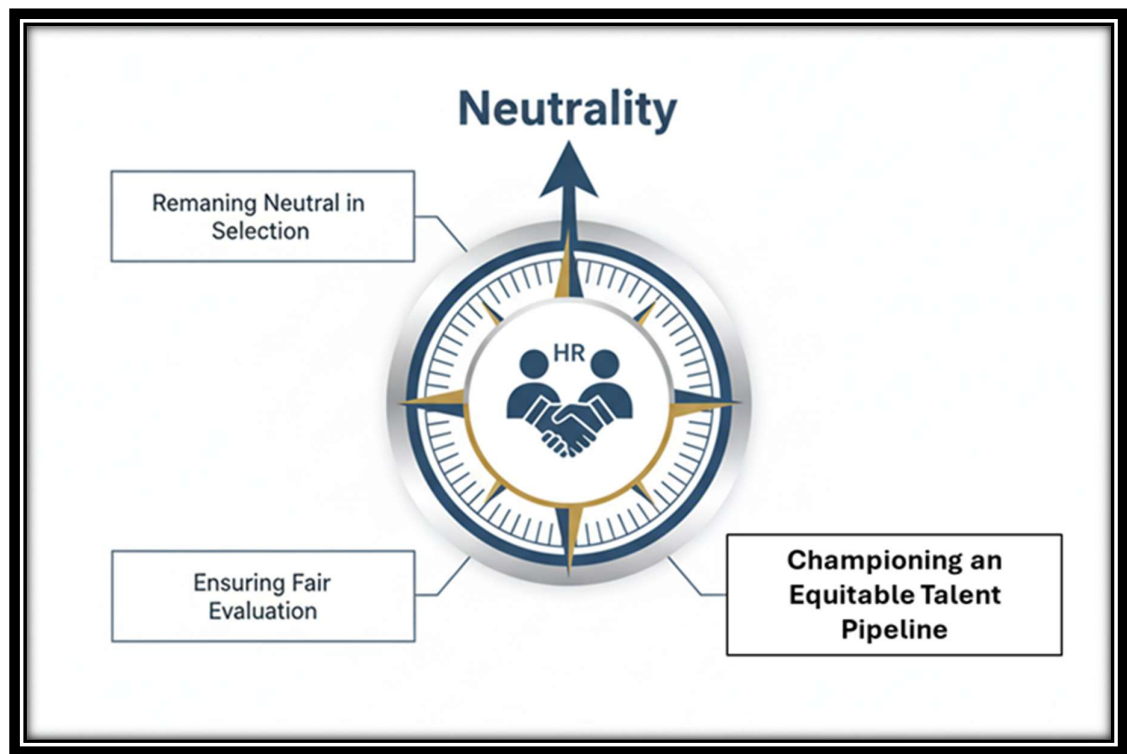
For Senior Leadership:



For Middle Managers and Reporting Officers:



For HR and Recruiters:



For Rank-and-File Employees:



C-5: EDMs – Publicity Posters (in Chinese)



C-6: EDMs – Publicity Posters (in Malay and Tamil)

To be supplemented closer to the roll-out.