

Workplace Diversity and Employee Versatility

Orishede Felix, Echimina, Emmanuel Chukwurah, Uyo
Elozino Emmanuella, Edewor Fevour Oghenekeno

Delta State University, Department of Business Administration, Abraka, Nigeria.

Delta State University, Department of Business Administration, Abraka, Nigeria.

Delta State University, Department of Marketing & Entrepreneurship, Abraka, Nigeria.

Delta State University, Department of Business Administration, Abraka, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

The paper examined the relationship between workforce diversity and employee versatility. The survey research design method was adopted for this paper. The instrument used to collect relevant data for the study was the questionnaire. The study centered on the Nigerian Banking Sector, the paper examined the relationship between gender diversity and age diversity with employee versatility in the Nigerian Organizations. In order to attain the research objectives, two hypotheses were formulated. The data collated were tools of analyzed using the Statistical tool of Regression statistics with the aid of SPSS. The findings showed that gender diversity and age diversity have significant relationship with employee versatility, the study concludes that workforce diversity is a key requirement for employee versatility in organizations particularly the banking industry. It is recommended that management should continue to uphold its diversity policies and practices in order to boost employee's versatility in the workplace.

Keywords: Workforce Diversity, Employee Versatility Gender Diversity and Age Diversity

I. INTRODUCTION

The world's increasing globalization needs a lot of interaction among people from various backgrounds than ever before. This is so because, individuals no longer live and work in narrow surroundings; as they are currently a part of a worldwide economy competing in nearly all part of the world (Patel, 2016). On these grounds, organizations are aiming to become more diversified in order to gain competitive advantage by becoming more creative, innovative and open to useful change. Today business workplace is changing at an increased speed and the change in

the employees' demographics, increase of jobs in the economy, continuing growth of the globalization and requirement for efficient and effective collaboration have surfaced as significant forces driving the importance of diversity in organizations. With the increase of globalization and competition, the workforce in all industrialized countries has become progressively heterogeneous. Advances in technology and the advent of a worldwide economy have brought the people of the world existing in the same place, nearer to each other. Griffin & Moorhead (2014) pointed out that having a diverse workforce requires managers to identify and manage the varied attribute that exist among the employees in the organization. Therefore, businesses, educational systems and other entities are investigating ways to better serve their constituents to attract and retain the finest and most qualified employees (Gupta, 2013). On these grounds, organizations are aiming to become more diversified in order to gain competitive advantage by becoming more creative, innovative and open to useful change.

Workforce diversity refers to those significant differences and similarities that are present among employees within an organization (Griffin & Moorhead, 2014). Nwinami (2014) said it represent that uniqueness which includes; an individual's personality, age, gender, ethnicity/race, religion, marital status, income, the work experience and all those views which supposes and sustains an organizations core value. It also means those organizations that are returning out to be more varied with respect to its workforce composition based on characteristics as age, ethnicity, expertise, etc. (Robbins & Judge, 2013).

Human resource is an important asset for any organization, and as such, having a diversified workforce is a primary concern for most

organizations. Although, it has become necessary for organizations to employ a diversified workforce, at the same time, it has become quite challenging for organizations with increasing diversified workforce to reap the benefits of diversity while managing its potentially disruptive effects (Kreitz, 2008) (Kreitz, 2008; Saxena, 2014). Organizations have recognized the fact that it is through the collective effort of its diversified workforce that monetary resources are harnessed to achieve organizational goals.

For organizations to reach its goals, the skills, knowledge, attitude and efforts of its workforce have to sharpened occasionally to optimize the effectiveness of its workforce and to enable them to meet greater challenges. Organizations are made up of individuals and without the workforce, organizations cannot achieve its goals (Mullins, 2010). For this reason, the management of its human resources is also a crucial issue for organizational leaders (Saxena, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

The work environment is becoming more complex due to globalization and competition which as a result has necessitated the need for a workforce that is made up of people with varying age, experience, knowledge and backgrounds to maximize competitive advantage organizations that wants to gain competitive advantage must widen its perspective about workforce diversity. In managing the workforce, managers have created diversity policies in their various firms. However, many organizations have not shown sincere interest to take the issues of gender management seriously, they pretend to embrace diversity rather than show a genuine desire for it by demonstrating true commitment to the principles of diversity and inclusion especially how it relates employee versatility.

In Nigeria, there appear to still be cases of tribalism, regional identities, nepotism and discrimination both in the public and private organizations. Cases of ethnic bias and other forms of discrimination still take places in organizations during hiring, promotion and other employer-employee relation practices. Hence, many firms are faced with the big challenge of managing its diverse workforce and the challenge of making sure that despite these differences' employees remain versatile on their job's responsibilities. Though some organizations train their new intake upon hiring on job related issues yet, individuals still take decisions and exhibit attitudes and behaviour that go against diversity principles. Therefore, the

study seeks to examine the relationship between workplace diversity and employee versatility in the firm.

Research Objectives

The general objective of the study is to examine the relationship between workforce diversity and employee Versatility in an organization. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. examine the relationship between gender diversity and employee versatility in the organization.
2. assess the relationship between age diversity and employee versatility in the organization.

Research Hypotheses

- 1 There is no significant relationship between gender diversity and employee versatility.
- 2 There is no significant relationship between age diversity and employee versatility.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Review of Concepts

Diversity

Diversity is the characteristics of a social grouping that reveals the degree of objectives or subjective differences existing among groups (Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). Scott & Sims (2016) defined workforce diversity "as a strategy that promotes and supports the integration of human diversity at all levels and uses focused diversity and inclusion policies and practices to guide this approach in work environment" All these definitions simply show that diversity is all about these characteristics that makes us different or similar to one another. In an organizational setting, a diverse workforce consists of a mixture of employees from various genders, ages, races, ethnic backgrounds, religious beliefs. Cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biological is for nature (Orishede&Ogbor, 2014).

Factors Contributing to Increased Diversity within the Workplace

Griffin & Van Fleet (2014), outlined three factors that contributed to organizations diverse nature, they include:

Globalization

Globalisation is that process whereby organizations start operating in an international scale. Globalization has resulted in the removal of barriers between markets thereby, allowing a free flow of goods and services, skills and ideas. As these barriers were eliminated, organizations saw an opportunity to enlarge their operations

worldwide and increase their market share in order to gain more competitive advantage over their competitors (Nwinami, 2014). Also, when organizations open offices and branches abroad, it must learn to deal with the different customs and social norms of the country where it is opening branches. As the managers and employees move from one job assignment to another across the national boundaries, organizations and their subsidiaries become more diverse.

Government Legislation and Judicial Regulations:

The government legislation and judicial decisions have forced a lot of organizations to explain its recruitment strategy and hire more broadly. Unlike like before where organizations were allowed to hire as the deemed fit, women could hardly even be seen in office jobs not to mention being among executives. There were issues of stereotype and prejudice that resulted in discrimination against women and other minorities. Today, organizations by regulations and law must employ people based on their qualifications.

Composition of the Labour Force

The composition of the labour force is becoming more and more diverse. Organizations are recognizing that by hiring a diverse workforce, they promote the most talented people available which will improve their overall quality of their workforce and increase effectiveness. By spreading a wider net in recruiting and looking beyond the traditional sources for new employees. The interplay between workforce diversity management and workforce culture suggests that a feeling that all employees are being developed and empowered within the workforce, this may most likely lead to the achievement of optimum corporate performance (Ogbor&Orishede, 2018). Most organizations have discovered more largely qualified and better qualified employees from different segment of the society. There are many small initiatives every day that help to improve workers performance for the organization as whole and for the individuals within it, single measures are unlikely to be sufficiently robust (Salami, Orishede&Moroka, 2022). The effectiveness of the labour force is generally related to workers performance in any organizational certain.

Gender Diversity

Powell (2011) defined gender as the physiological inference of being a male or female, such as expectations beliefs about the type of attitudes, behaviors, knowledge, skills and areas of

interest that are more or typical of one gender than the other. The study of gender diversity focuses on how individuals believe that men and women differ. These gender variations influence the manner in which individuals react to the behaviours of others in the work settings or any other group coalition. Gender diversities are visible in prejudices, stereotypes and discrimination.

Over the past few decades, the organizational barriers that prevent women from reaching the peak of their careers have been a vital area of organizational research. Singh & Vinnicombe(2004) in their study found that women are almost if not completely absent when it comes to occupying leadership positions in organizations. However, male directors often form an elite group at the top of the corporate world and only very few women are able to breakthrough these glass ceiling into this elite group, despite making inroads into middle management. This highlights that gender on the board of some large organizations is an barrier to advancement. Singh & Vinnicombe(2004) argued that this is a matter of concern, because the talents of women are not being fully utilized. The private sector is perceived and characterized as influential, financially large and generally not controlled by the state.

Historically, the private sector, including including the board of directors, has been dominated by men where men hold the majority of high-level and power-related positions. One of the most common metaphors used to describe women in leadership positions is that of the glass ceiling". Mavin said the phrase 'Glass ceiling' was made up in the 1960s. This is used to describe a subtle obstacle that is so clear but yet very powerful that it can hinder women from claiming up the managerial ladder. The glass ceiling was coined to describe organizational practices and processes that create difficulties and limitations that women face when trying to reach the highest position in their particular field. Here, women may be unable to reach the top of the management hierarchy even if they can. (Gatrell & Swan, 2008).

Age Diversity

Age diversity is a common phenomenon present in almost all groups, such as higher institutions, sports teams, and work or team groups with members of different ages. Explained that the workforce is unique in its generation, which presents new challenges for those trying to attract, retain, manage and quality employees. Each generation believes that its strengths are unique and they do not enhance those of other generations. When age diversity is practiced, it benefits both the

organization and the employees. Having an age-diverse environment produces and creates better working relationships and improves social cohesion for all.

Employee Versatility

Durga (2017) defined versatility as the act of executing a task or an accomplishment or achievement. He adds that employee Versatility is how well an employee is effectively fulfilling his/her job requirement or discharging his/her duties so as to achieve good results. O'Flynn, Ricciotta, Nicholas, Lau, Sammarino & Fisher (2001) said employee Versatility is defined using three criteria. First criteria, is that employees' output meets the standard of Versatility set by the organization's external customers. Secondly, employee versatility can be defined in terms of how the social processes utilized in the Versatility of their jobs enhances or maintain the capability of the employees to work together on subsequent group tasks. Finally, that employee's personal needs are satisfied instead of them being frustrated by the group Versatility. Versatility is an individual's behaviour and results. O'Flynn, et al (2001) argues that the Versatility of employees is not truly representative of what a group Versatility is. Rather, it is the personal experience of group members and the subsequent ability of the employees to perform in the future that also defines the employee's Versatility. In order to sustain advantage, competencies must be dynamic, evolving to forms that are more favourable in order to sustain advantage over the long haul (Orishede, 2021). O'Flynn, et al (2001) argue that there are multiple dimensions when it comes to rating of Versatility seeing that different constituents have their different Versatility criteria and access to data. For instance, management may be more interested in looking at the output of the employees whereas; the employees may be interested in creating a productive environment for themselves. For an individual employee, performance may refer to work effectiveness, quality and efficiency at the task level (Orishede & Ejimofor, 2020). They may have daily information about their interactions with co-workers or group members and use this data to evaluate Versatility.

Review of Related Theory

Social Identity Theory

This theory predicts that people tend to group themselves into specific groups based on certain areas which are of personal importance to them such as demographic characteristics like ethnicity, gender, etc. the result of this is that they

tend to favour colleagues of their in-group at the expense of the out-groups. This theory was initially formulated by Tajfel (1978) to explain exclusion in the workplace. Tajfel (1978) said social identity theory is "that part of an individual's self-concept which originates in his/her membership in a social group(s), along with the importance and the emotional importance attached to that group membership". Korte (2007) said that social identity theory tries to explain group membership and behaviour. It is a theory that explains the conditions under which a person perceives the collection of people (plus themselves) as a group as well as the consequences of perceiving people in group terms. This theory puts forward a negative effect between workforce diversity and Versatility (O'Flynn, et al. 2001).

Gender Diversity and Employee Versatility

Arokiasany (2013) observed that many organizations prefer to hire more of the male workers than the female workers because they are of the opinion that male workers have the ability to perform their jobs and can manage their jobs well. The general creativity and innovativeness of an organization may be enhanced by the combination of both male and female in the organization. From research, it has been discovered that gender diverse groups have the ability to make quality decisions much more than an homogeneous team. Based on resource-based view of an organization, gender diversity is seen to have a positive correlation with Versatility whereas, the social categorization and social identity theories shows a negative correlation. It is assumed that the negative side of gender dissimilarity. The negative side gender diversity delays decision making process because of internal conflict among members. Researchers argue that female and minorities are often seen as bringing different skills, values, ways of thinking and life experiences to the organization, which organizations could harness to achieve Versatility gains, particularly to enhance innovation and creativity Kirton & Greene (2016).

Age Diversity and Employee Versatility

Robbins & Judge (2013) said the relationship between age and employees' job Versatility is likely to be an issue of increasing importance during the next decade. According to them, the reasons for this are; first, the common believe that job Versatility diminishes with increasing age. Secondly, the present workplace is characterized by aging population. As such, quite a number of employers recognize that older workers signify a massive potential pool of high-quality

applicants. Thirdly, is the regulations set by some countries that outlaw mandatory retirement e.g. the USA. It is a common to assume that as people get older, their skills in terms of agility, strength, speed and coordination begins to decline and job could become boring and lack of intellectual stimulation all contributes to reduced productivity. On the contrary, researches conducted find that the age of employees and their job Versatility are not correlated and older workforce are more likely to take part in citizenship behaviour (Robbins & Judge, 2013). This commitment is seen more in older employees than younger environment seeing that they have lower rates of avoidable absence and thus equal rates of unavoidable absence, e.g. sickness absences. Older employees often gets fulfilled in their work, report better relationships with their fellow employees and are committed to their organization's goals. Josef (2010) said several studies have examined the correlation between age and versatility, but no clear correlation could be found between age and Versatility.

Research Methodology

The study made use of a cross sectional survey research design, data were collected from primary sources, that is employees First Bank of Nigeria using a structured questionnaire. The questions contained in the questionnaire bordered on how workforce diversity relates to employees' Versatility, the sample size used for the was drawn from the staff of the selected bank, the data collected were analyzed and the hypotheses were tested using Regression Analysis to ascertain the effect of workforce diversity on employee versatility.

Analysis

Test of Hypotheses

Statement of Hypotheses:

Test of Hypotheses

- 1 There is no significant relationship between gender diversity and employee versatility
- 2 There is no significant relationship between age diversity and employee versatility

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.509 ^a	.259	.244	.402

a. Predictors: (Constant) EMPLOYEE VERSATILITY

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.256	3	2.752	89.998	.000 ^b
	Residual	23.637	146	.162		
	Total	31.893	149			

a. Dependent Variable: EMPLOYEE VERSATILITY

b. Predictors: (Constant), GENDER DIVERSITY, AGE DIVERSITY

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.391	.365		0.24	.285
	GENDER DIVERSITY	.014	.027	.672	47.515	.000
	AGE DIVERSITY	.310	.076	.870	78.073	.03

a. Dependent Variable: EMPLOYEE VERSATILITY

The labelled Coefficients, checks the relevance of the independent variable (Gender Diversity) on the Employee versatility in First Bank Nigerian Plc. The B values represent the estimates of the model while the Beta value is used to check the predictive power of the model. From the above, the Beta value for the Gender Diversity is very high (i.e. 67.2%), indicating a very high effect on the Employee versatility, with p-value less than 0.05. t interval, this in turn means that the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis accepted. Also, the table showed that statistical significance of the independent variable (Age Diversity), making the null hypothesis that the slope parameter is insignificant and is rejected at a 95 % confident interval. The Beta value for age diversity is high. This shows that Beta value for the Gender Diversity is high, indicating a high effect (87%) on the Employee versatility, with p-value less than 0.05.

III. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of objective one confirms that there is a strong positive relationship between gender diversity and employee versatility at First Bank Nigeria Plc. The findings revealed most of the employees enjoy working with their fellow colleagues of opposite gender hence improving versatility. Employees like the fact that there are also promotional opportunities and career advancement made available to all employees irrespective of gender and this enhances their versatility. Based on the findings, the alternate hypothesis one which stated that there is a significant relationship between gender diversity and employee versatility was accepted.

The result of objective two also showed that there is a strong significant relationship between age diversity and employee versatility in First Bank Nigeria Plc. the findings showed that employee are more versatile when they are included in the decision making process irrespective of age differences. Though, some employees say they are motivated to complete their task when they are working with people of the same age group however, most of the employees say they have no problem and were comfortable working with their colleagues of different age. Based on the findings, the alternate hypothesis which stated that 'there is a significant relationship between age diversity and employee versatility' was accepted.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the study concludes that workforce diversity is a key requirement for

employee versatility in organizations particularly the banking industry. This showed that a significant relationship exists between workforce diversity and employee versatility. This means that workforce diversity is strong influencer of employee versatility, when employee is conversant with his job responsibilities, he can be more productive and still has the strength and skills to carry out task. Organization that has a good mix of male and female employees is more likely to be versatile with their responsibilities and perform better than an organization that is dominated by same gender.

Recommendations

The study recommends thus:

1. Task should be communicated clearly and organization should promote a general language to enhance trust amongst employees.
2. organizations should discourage the glass ceiling that prevents women from advancing into senior positions in the organizations so as to motivate employees when they work with their colleagues of different gender for effective performance their job.

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