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THE IMPACT OF WORKFORCE DIVERSITY ON JOB PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANISATIONS

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Abstract. The primary objective of this study is to examine the impact of workforce diversity on job performance on workload - the ability to effectively and efficiently manage, execute, and complete assigned tasks or responsibilities within an agreed timeframe and quality standard, contributing to the achievement of organisational goals. The study used the following performance indicators related to job performance and workload, i.e., timing of work assignments, quality of work, efficiency in work and ability to give feedback on work activities. Data were sourced via primary and secondary sources. The primary source used a standardised questionnaire designed to align with the study's objectives and research hypothesis using the Likert scale method. Two thousand respondents were purposively selected across the public sector organisations such as ministries, departments and public agencies (MDAs) in a select market – Nigeria. The collected data was analysed using the SPSS statistical analysis software, and the hypothesis about the impact of workforce diversity on performance was tested. The results confirm that workforce diversity significantly impacts job performance and workload as it fosters timeliness, ensures quality control in tasks completed, and promotes feedback among employees in an organisation.

Keywords: workforce; diversity; employee; performance; public sector; organisation

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JEL Classifications: D73, J45, J60, J68, J81

1. Introduction

The contemporary global landscape might metaphorically be referred to as the "global village" – a term initially coined quite a time ago in light of media globalisation (McLuhan, 1964) but later extended to describe a broader phenomenon of globalisation phenomenon wherein the unrestricted flow of persons and services across borders has fostered interconnectivity among nations. This interconnectivity has, in turn, led to the diversification of the workforce in organisations as individuals seek opportunities for improved livelihood through labour mobility. This mobility of labour consequently gives rise to different people with different backgrounds, cultures, religions, and skills (Wang et al., 2024) finding themselves together in the same workplace and environment, creating diversity in the workplace.

Workforce diversity encompasses the differences among personnel within an organisation, particularly regarding their demographic characteristics, backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. Shijimol (2024) defines diversity as the amalgamation of employees' distinctiveness and similarities, encompassing individual traits, values, beliefs, experiences, backgrounds, preferences, and behaviours. The diversity of the workforce at the organisation suggests that the workplace is varied in terms of gender, education, race, and ethnicity and that each employee has exceptional characteristics that set them apart. Also, there are persons from dissimilar socio-cultural (Kipane et al., 2023) origins coexisting in the office. Values and beliefs are fundamental when a cultural fit of individuals and organisations is considered – the degree of alignment between an individual's values, beliefs, and behaviours and those of the organisation. A higher fit facilitates higher job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and performance (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Lately, novel methods of assessing individual values and linking them with skills, learning ability and performance have been developed, such as Motival social technology (Kaže et al., 2022), thus suggesting the high topicality of such a research area. Moreover, in a broader sense, globalisation has redefined the cultural fit of individuals with more extensive social entities beyond productivity at an organisational level to impact value added to industries or even economies (Kaže et al., 2011), becoming even more impactful.

According to Amar (2023), workforce diversity refers to variations in employee characteristics such as age, cultural background, physical abilities and disabilities, race, religion, and gender. Kundu and Turan (1999) define workforce diversity as the coexistence of individuals from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds within an industry. Diversity encompasses representing individuals from various demographic backgrounds, regardless of their hierarchical positions within the industry, in a single organisational entity with shared objectives and collaborative mechanisms, e.g., institution, function, or department.

Diversity in an organisation promotes creative problem-solving and innovative ideas, as different viewpoints identify potential blind spots and generate a broader range of solutions to challenges. Diversity also brings about adaptability, as a diverse workforce is better equipped to adapt to changes and technological advancements (Malatji, 2024). Employees from diverse backgrounds may bring unique insights that help the organisation function more effectively, measured by their productivity indicators, such as job performance on workload.

The purpose of the study is to examine the impact of workforce diversity on employee job performance.

2. Conceptual and Empirical Review

Job performance on workload is a commonly used term in the human resource (HR) management industry and by HR professionals in organisations. However, the scientific literature does not provide a single origin for it. Unlike formal theories (e.g., Maslow's hierarchy of needs or Herzberg's two-factor theory), this term has been coined for practical use through HR and organisational management decisions, strategies, and employee appraisal procedures rather than academic use. Its evolution in business is mainly related to the extent of employees meeting expectations related to assigned responsibilities, where job performance usually refers to the desired outcomes or outputs of an employee's work efforts measured by time, quality and compliance, but workload refers to the quantity or volume of tasks and responsibilities assigned to an individual.

The authors of this study define job performance on workload as the ability to effectively and efficiently manage, execute, and complete assigned tasks or responsibilities within an agreed-upon timeframe and quality standard, contributing to achieving organisational goals.

This pertains to an employee's proficiency in accomplishing duties or projects assigned to them. It entails achieving anticipated results, producing high-quality work, and adhering to deadlines, contingent upon the quality of the employee's performance (Cho & Sultana, 2024). The timely execution of a task or responsibility assigned to an employee per the established guidelines is a critical component of job performance (Etalong & Chikeleze, 2022).

This implies how employees effectively manage and fulfil their tasks or responsibilities within their workload, measured through these key facets that might all be influenced by workforce diversity (see Figure 1).

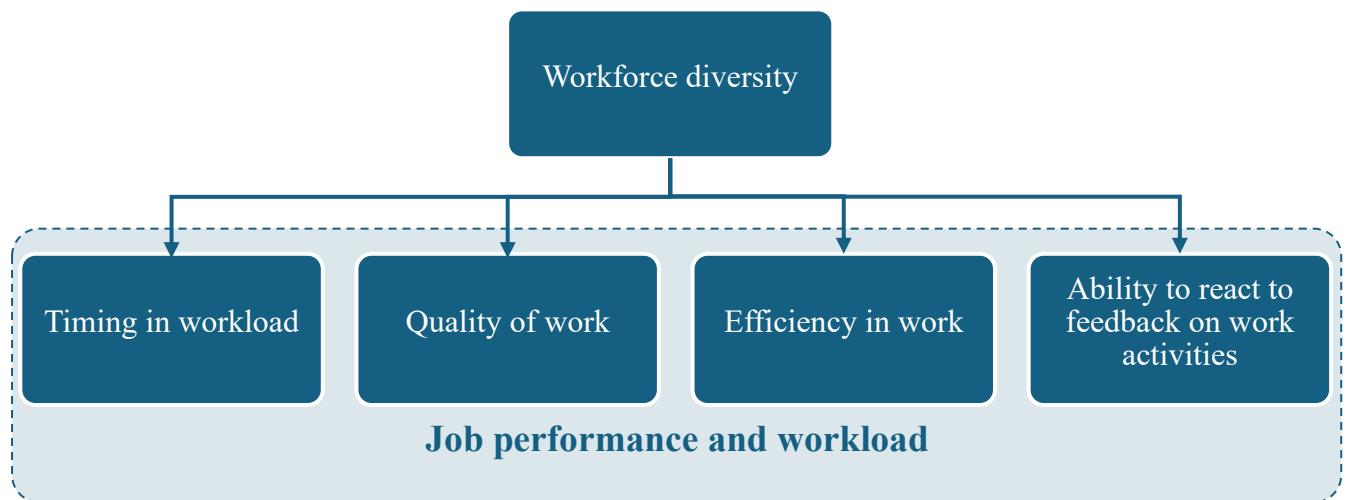


Figure 1. “Workforce Diversity – Performance on Workload” Conceptual Framework
Source: Authors’ conceptualisation

Workplace diversity might involve factors such as age and ethnicity that can significantly impact employee performance and innovative efficiency. Studies conducted by Andoh et al. (2019) and Anum-Addo et al. (2024) discovered that age and educational diversity had a notable effect on employee performance; however, gender and ethnicity diversity had no discernible effect.

Mayer (2016) highlighted that workforce diversity positively influences organisational innovation by fostering a pro-diversity culture and promoting better treatment of employees, which enhances innovative efficiency. However, Kerga (2018) argued that only ethnicity significantly impacted employee performance, suggesting that the influence of diversity on performance may vary depending on the specific context. Maqsoom Ali Musarat, Mubbasit, Salah, Ashraf, Babar, and Shaheen (2023) observed that age plays a significant role in the performance of employees in a study covering construction workers where the distant location of the construction site negatively impacted older workers. A separate study by Pandey and Risal (2023) lamented that age diversity might cause conflict in the organisation as youngsters are less dedicated to their work schedule than older and experienced employees who are more devoted to their work, thereby bringing about efficiency and effectiveness in the workplace. On the other hand, young people have a more modern understanding of such sensitive topics as data security in the work process (Jurgelāne-Kaldava et al., 2024), foreign investment (Kastratović et al., 2024), conducting public procurement (Krivins, 2014; Krivins, 2019), fighting corruption (Krivins et al., 2023), cashless policy (Kaže et al., 2007), banking sector (Obeid, 2024a), impact on economic indicators (Obeid, 2024b), etc.

Schlick, Frieling, and Wegge (2013) suggest that the detrimental impact of age diversity on employee performance may be attributed to the belief that older employees may be less effective and productive due to physical decline associated with ageing. Mary, Malhotra, Goswami, Kumar, and Priya (2023) argue that organisations with a diverse workforce generally exhibit more significant levels of organisational performance, as indicated by productivity, innovation, and employee satisfaction. Similarly, Ahmed, Khan, Zaman, Ahmed, and Nabeel ul Haq (2023) support this claim by highlighting team cohesion (Sachdeva & Upadhyay, 2024). leads to enhanced efficiency and effectiveness through the interaction among team members in pursuit of organisational objectives. Rahman (2017) thoroughly examines the correlation between workforce diversity and employee performance, emphasising the influence of diversity in gender (Monteiro et al., 2024), age, ethnicity, and educational background. According to the study, ethnic diversity had the most significant influence on employee performance compared to other dimensions of workforce diversity. In their research, Haleem and

Khalil Ur Rahman (2023) found that a diverse workforce, which includes individuals of different ages, genders, and educational backgrounds, substantially influences creativity.

The study by Racolța-Paina and Mădularu (2022) aimed to identify the perception of workforce diversity among managers (Ahiawodzi & Kumah, 2024) and team members, specifically with age diversity. The study found that older individuals contribute a wealth of experience, while younger individuals bring fresh ideas to drive the organisation's progress. Ahmad and Rahman (2019) expressed concern over the detrimental impact of age, gender, and ethnicity diversity on employees' performance. Thapa (2023) argues that workforce diversity, encompassing factors such as gender, education, and ethnicity, has a beneficial impact on organisational performance. This is because perceiving a sense of diversity inside the organisation leads to an improvement in organisational performance. A study by Larasatie et al. (2024) explores the correlation between economic and employment diversity and local/regional economic performance, mainly focusing on the collaborative efforts of ethnically diverse groups.

Mahat's (2024) study found that ethnicity moderates the relationship between age and performance. While both age and ethnicity alone positively impact performance, the interaction between ethnicity as a moderating component and age has a negative effect. A study on diversity management conducted by Ashikali and Groeneveld (2014) noted that diversity fosters group cohesion within an organisation, consequently enhancing employee performance through engagement and dedication among employees in public sector organisations. Rengers and Warner (2024) demonstrated that diversity fosters inclusion since employees from various ethnic backgrounds collaborate towards the organisation's shared objectives. Many organisations strive to effectively manage and attract a more diverse staff (Talajić et al., 2024). The workplace is evolving in tandem with the global landscape. In modern times, employees are geographically scattered throughout several cities, countries, and continents. Employees frequently engage with an expanding range of persons from many cultural backgrounds, ethnicities, religions, and sexual orientations.

Liu, Zhu, and Wang (2023) argue that the workforce has been increasingly diversified compared to the past. While organisations actively leverage workforce diversity to improve team innovation and organisational performance, it has been observed that workforce diversity also carries significant hazards, with interpersonal conflict being the most prominent. Chico et al. (2023) argue that diversity improves employees' positive attitudes towards work, and organisations also utilise diversity to promote equal treatment and behaviour among employees.

3. Research Methodology

The study employs a survey design based on a quantitative approach. It uses a structured questionnaire to collect primary data. The study deploys purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, to select 2,000 purposively chosen respondents representing the public administration of a select country - respondents who are directly involved in or impacted by workforce diversity in the area, acknowledging the limitations for generalisability to the broader population. The population of the study was drawn from the following ministries, departments and agencies in the Southeast, Nigeria: Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance, Office of the Head of Service and Civil Service Commission. The responders were chosen based on their degree of expertise and the crucial role that the Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) play in relation to the topic of the study.

The questionnaire measures diversity's impact on key performance indicators, including timeliness, quality of work, efficiency, and feedback related to the respective public sector area only.

Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including regression analysis, to evaluate the relationship between workforce diversity and employee performance. Statistical tests were conducted using SPSS version 20 software to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings.

Such a research design aids the researcher in answering the research questions using empirical data. Research design is a strategy for answering your research questions using empirical data. A well-structured design helps ensure that your methods match your research objectives and that the right method is used for data analysis. This study adopted a survey research design as it allows the researcher to collect data about opinions, behaviours, experiences, and characteristics by interacting directly with the respondents and focusing on the applied nature of the research – public sector employees and their performance on workload.

4. Data presentation and Analysis

Table 1 provides the answer to the question, "To what extent does workforce diversity impact employee workload in the following areas (Timeliness in work assignments)?"

Table 1. Timeliness in work assignments

Options		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Very High	998	49.9
	High	1,000	50
	Don't know	0	0
	Low	0	0
	Very Low	2	0.1
	Total	2,000	100.0

Source: Field survey 2024

Table 1 shows that 49.9% of the respondents noted that workforce diversity has a very high effect on employee timing of workload as employees crossbreed different ideas to handle the tasks assigned to them. A diverse workforce brings different perspectives and ideas, which can lead to more creative solutions and efficient problem-solving. This can improve processes and reduce the time required to complete tasks. 50% of the respondents also noted that diverse teams often have a wider range of skills and experiences, allowing them to tackle assignments more effectively and efficiently. This can lead to quicker turnaround times. While 1% of the responses show that the effect of diversity on employee timing on workload is very low, as organisations under review are yet to come to terms with the benefits associated with diversity and how to harness it for the betterment of the organisation.

Table 2. Quality of work

Options		Frequency	Per cent
Valid	Very High	1,028	51.4
	High	900	45
	Don't know	20	1
	Low	25	1.25
	Very Low	27	1.35
	Total	2,000	100.0

Source: Field survey 2024

Table 2 shows that 51.4% of the responses show that workforce diversity positively affects the quality of work. A diverse workforce with different skill sets in the organisation cooperates to ensure that the services rendered to the public are of standard and beneficial to the public.

45% noted that a diverse workforce includes individuals with various skills and expertise, which can improve the team's overall capability. 1.25 and 1.35% observed that the impact of workforce diversity on the quality of work is low and very low, respectively, due to the conflict that may arise in the organisation. Diverse teams might experience more conflicts due to differing perspectives and values, which requires effective conflict resolution strategies.

Table 3. Efficiency of work

Options		Frequency	Per cent
Valid	Very High	1,000	50
	High	829	41.45
	Don't know	16	0.8
	Low	104	5.2
	Very Low	51	2.55
	Total	2,000	100.0

Source: Field survey 2024

Table 3 shows that 50% of the respondents noted that workforce diversity brings about work efficiency. In the aspect of workload management, appropriate workload distribution and management can prevent burnout and ensure employees have the resources needed to work efficiently.

41.45% observed that a diverse workforce ensures collaboration, streamlining processes and reducing unnecessary tasks, leading to increased efficiency. 0.8% opted that they don't know if workforce diversity affects employee work efficiency. 5.2 and 2.55% observed that efficiency helps in task prioritisation, whereby employees pay attention to essential tasks and set realistic deadlines to complete the tasks assigned to them.

Table 4. Effectiveness in required quality of work

Options		Frequency	Per cent
Valid	Very High	1,008	50.4
	High	817	40.85
	Don't know	19	0.95
	Low	107	5.35
	Very Low	49	2.45
	Total	2,000	100.0

Source: Field survey 2024

Table 4 shows that 50.4% noted that workforce diversity ensures effectiveness in the required quality of work. Employees are given autonomy and empowered to make decisions and take ownership of their work, which leads to effectiveness and productivity in the organisation and a quality output on the job done. 40.85% responded that effectiveness in quality of work is highly affected as it relates to the extent to which an employee completes tasks and responsibilities associated with their role, measured by both quality of work over time. 0.95% lamented that they don't know. In comparison, 5.35% and 2.45% noted that the effect of workforce diversity on employee effectiveness in required quality of work is low and very low, respectively 60.4% of the respondents are of the view that workforce diversity creates room for feedback on work done and continues to seek improvement where there are lapses. 37% also noted that employees use constructive criticism to enhance their skills and contribute to the organisation's overall success, as feedback makes this possible (see Tables 5 and 6).

Table 5. Ability to give feedback on work activities

Options		Frequency	Per cent
Valid	Very High	1,208	60.4
	High	756	37.8
	Don't know	6	0.3
	Low	10	0.5
	Very Low	20	1
	Total	2,000	100.0

Source: Field survey 2024

Table 6. Number of tasks completed per unit of time

Options	Frequency	Per cent
Valid		
Very High	1,225	61.25
High	705	35.25
Don't know	0	0
Low	21	1.05
Very Low	49	2.45
Total	2,000	100.0

Source: Field survey 2024

61.25% of the responses show that workforce diversity results in improved processes and methodologies, increasing productivity and the number of tasks completed, as diverse organisations bring a wide range of perspectives and experiences, which can lead to more innovative solutions and efficient problem-solving. 35.25% also noted that a diverse workforce with employees of varied skills and expertise enables the team to handle a wider array of tasks more efficiently

Test of hypothesis

H₀: Workforce diversity has no significant effect on employee Responsiveness (see Tables 7 and 8).

Table 7. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.32 (a)	.112	.806	.64515

a Predictors: (Constant), Workforce diversity

Source: created by authors, 2024

Table 8. ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	602.253	1	602.253	16.556	.000(a)
1 Residual	144.845	348	.416		
Total	747.097	349			

- Predictors: (Constant), Workforce diversity
- Dependent Variable: Employee responsiveness

Source: created by authors, 2024

The hypothesis that stated that “Workforce diversity has no significant effect on employee Responsiveness” where responsiveness (“Ability to act on feedback for work activities” of the framework, see Figure 1) was rejected for the following reasons:

- at $R=0.32$, $R^2=0.11$, $F(1, 349)=16.556$; $p<.05$. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This implies a positive impact of Workforce diversity on employee responsiveness;
- based on the premise that workforce diversity substantially impacts employee responsiveness.
- By implementing effective techniques, organisations can utilise diversity to enhance their overall adaptability and effectiveness. The discovery aligns with the research conducted by Sanyang & Othman (2019), Andoh et al. (2019), Khan et al. (2019), and Larasatie et al. (2024), which all concluded that having a diverse workforce improves productivity and provides a competitive

advantage. Additionally, it empowers employees to take responsibility for job satisfaction and strive for optimal performance.

5. Conclusions and Discussion

The results show that workforce diversity affects job performance. Workforce diversity significantly improves job performance through enhanced creativity, better decision-making, and greater employee engagement. This is made possible with a strong inclusive policy on the ground, which is lacking in the organisations under review. Therefore, there is an urgent need for inclusive leadership; leaders should be committed to diversity and inclusion, setting the tone from the top and modelling inclusive behaviours to promote teamwork and collaboration among employees.

In this context, the most critical issue is the relationship between organisational culture and human resource management practices. The higher the level of employee involvement, the greater the chance of positively impacting practice, control and assistance. At the same time, although employee activity and taking responsibility are interrelated, this correlation is not statistically significant. Organisational effectiveness is assessed in terms of efficiency, innovative innovations, employee quality, and satisfaction. Appropriate design of the workplace, implementation of proper supervisory practices and appropriate remuneration have a positive and significant impact on improving organisational performance. If the work allows the employee to use all his abilities, he is satisfied and interested. This, in turn, leads to improving the organisation's performance, increasing its effectiveness in achieving its goals. In addition, proper work planning allows employees to take initiative and develop their abilities and ideas.

The problem of supervising employees is very complex. On the one hand, under supervision, employees feel supported and safe and can take the initiative and solve work issues. Employees know that when they need help, they can turn to their manager, who will provide appropriate instructions for solving the problem. In this context, employee satisfaction and efficiency may increase. On the other hand, excessively close supervision reduces employee satisfaction, which may decrease productivity - especially when they feel that they are closely watched and cannot take the initiative to solve work issues in their way. This creates a negative impact on the efficiency of the organisation. Strict control over employees is perceived as a lack of trust. Strict control exerts pressure, and employees may feel they are not allowed to take responsibility. Therefore, it is necessary to develop proper supervision and control practices not to reduce employee performance. In turn, further research is needed to identify the reasons employees reduce their productivity.

The issue of motivation and rewards has different solutions. For example, an organisation that consistently follows its reward system can incentivise employees to improve their efficiency constantly. This can subsequently improve overall organisational efficiency. However, for many employees, material rewards will not be too significant a motivation compared to satisfaction from the work done. A separate aspect of the problem is competition. Often, many organisations do not treat their employees as an advantage over competing organisations. Therefore, they do not invest in improving the abilities and skills of employees and do not try to create a positive working climate. How an organisation and human resources are managed is, to some extent, influenced by the culture of a particular country and the culture of a particular industry. However, there are effective management practices everywhere - for example, a good working environment, careful work planning, supportive control over employees, promoting cooperation, rewarding, and showing initiative.

6. Novelty of the Research

There are several novel elements in the study. First, we distinguished job performance and workload, terms not frequently used together in business practice. Second, we developed an original Workforce Diversity - Performance and Workload framework (Figure 1), and we enriched the research models used before by adding additional dimensions, such as the ability to act on feedback for work activities (responsiveness). To investigate the extent to which effectiveness influences the other dimensions, it was important to verify whether good HR practices exist and which can be used in different countries despite different national cultures. The study's

objectives were achieved based on the selected model, mainly because the model included various dimensions and was limited to public administration within a select single country.

7. Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

Our study applies according to a specific organisation's needs and capabilities. It contributes to improving the effectiveness of achieving the organisation's goals - organisational development, customer and employee satisfaction, innovation, and quality improvement. This study makes a theoretical contribution to the existing knowledge of HR management and offers a practical application of the theory.

However, the study has its limitations. Our research framework is limited to a specific region (a select market in Nigeria where a field survey was implemented). The selected model allowed us to understand the differences in detail, although the analysis was quite tricky and might show varied results across multi-market setups. We acknowledge this limitation and recommend further research to test and deploy the model in a broader perspective of wider, economically and culturally diverse markets. Future studies could apply the design and methodology of this study, extending it to different regions of the world and examining also different industries and organisations, including the private sector. Another limitation of this study is the reasons that lead employees to a particular perception of reality and behaviour, where values and attitudes-based technologies such as Motival (Kaže et al., 2022) might be deployed as a particularly efficient approach for better understanding the diversity and related motivations. Although many limitations might exist, the study provides valuable insights for further exploration of the realms.

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