

## Workplace Diversity and Innovativeness of Selected Private Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

Every organisation strives to enhance its innovativeness and demonstrate its value to the world. As a result, organisations have started aligning their priorities to focus on factors that improve the effectiveness of their institutions, particularly within the context of universities. The ability of any organisation to survive in modern society may depend on fostering a harmonious relationship among employees who are responsible for carrying out the necessary activities to achieve the organisation's goals. However, it has been observed, particularly in universities, that the level of outcomes falls short of the expected standard. This can be attributed to a decline in innovation or other factors, these findings indicate that institutional outcomes are declining due to a poor workplace diversity culture, the nature of the work environment, and differences in personalities. The study adopted survey research design. The population of study was 797 non-academic staff of five selected private Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The sample size of 475 was determined using research advisor table. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting respondents. A structured and validated questionnaire was used for data collection with Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the constructs that ranged between 0.716 and 0.837. The response rate was 73%. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential (multiple and hierarchical regression) statistics. The study found that workplace diversity has significant effect on innovativeness ( $\text{Adj.}R^2 = 0.409$ ,  $F(5, 341) = 48.830$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), creativity ( $\text{Adj.}R^2 = 0.302$ ,  $F(5, 341) = 30.923$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The study concluded that workplace diversity has significant effect on innovativeness of selected private Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study recommended that, to ensure the success of diversity initiatives, management should establish a system for monitoring and assessing the impact of these initiatives over time. Regular evaluation will enable organisations to identify areas for improvement and make informed decisions about future strategies and policies related to diversity and inclusion.

## **Background to the Study**

Organisations strive continuously to improve its innovativeness and to demonstrate values to the world. This is important for the benefits it provides in terms of increased productivity and employee engagement. Despite this, it is observed especially among educational organisations that the level of organisational innovativeness does not often measure up to desired standard due to poor level of work diversity management. As said, the implication seems not far from the defective nature of diversity as orchestrated by institutional policy, which had adversely affected the attitude and personality of employees in the universities.

Globally, the work environment is becoming more complex due to business globalization and competition. This, as a result, has necessitated the need for employees comprising of people with varying ages, genders, experiences, knowledge, and different native and national backgrounds to maximize competitive advantage for business sustainability and desired organisational outcomes (Akinnusi et al., 2017). Lack of in-person collaboration, lack of access to necessary resources and tools, and the cost of developing new products are factors that have hindered the development of new ideas and products.

According to statistics collected from ten large U.S. tech businesses between 2014 and 2019, organisations with more diverse leadership teams report higher innovation revenues This is because, when it comes to diversity and inclusion in the industry, the United States continues to underperform (Evans, 2020). Innovativeness in organisation functionality through positive employee outcomes has been a primary emphasis for education managers in the United Kingdom (UK) (Marcinko & Taylor, 2021). This understanding has prompted academics and practitioners to argue for the need for a systematic approach to measuring effectiveness that extends beyond the scope of the individual stakeholder, as well as the integration of measures into the strategic planning process, which necessitates stringent management control systems (Ozgc, & Ramaswamy, 2017).

In Africa, organisational outcomes: poor creativity, lack of innovativeness, and decline in organisational surpluses, are a critical issue in contemporary times. Institutions face the constraints of technological backwardness, lack of human resource skills, weak management systems, and insufficient use of information technology and low level of organisational outcomes (Makanga & Paul, 2017). South Africa for instance has been faced with frequent labour unrest, with many employees expressing dissatisfaction with their jobs precisely in the financial sector (Mlandi & Vander, 2015). In Nigeria, the diversity management concept is yet to gain full acceptance outside (Ahmed & Bukar, 2020), raising concerns about its universal applicability and relevance.

Some organisation leaders have failed to understand how the workplace interacts with one another as individuals and as groups, and how the behaviour of the workplace affects both employee and organisational performance (Makhdoomi & Nika, 2017; Ng & Sears, 2020). In spite of this, and the fact that workplace diversity is yet to emerge on the

radar screen of many Human Resources (HR) practitioners and business leaders in Nigeria (particularly in the private sector), some forward-looking organisations are embracing diversity to create an inclusive workplace, possible outcomes that could be achieved by organisations operating in Nigeria include increased efficiency and productivity, improved communication and collaboration, and increased surplus. (Ahmed & Bukar, 2020). There are workplace diversity components that are essential in any organisation which have not been given adequate attention to includes age, gender, ethnicity, personality and attitude among others. In ensuring conditions that enable workers to operate properly in their working environment, one should bear in mind that humans are organisation's mainly valuable resource (Hapompwe et al., 2020).

There is paucity of research addressing the efficacy of workplace diversity components on innovativeness of private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. Factors such as political, social and cultural, psychological, pedagogical, economic, technological, legal among others have been identified as possible factors responsible for poor innovativeness among different institutions (Abunasser et al., 2020; Luke, 2018; Williamson, 2017). This study investigates the effect of workplace diversity on innovativeness of selected private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria.

To achieve this objective, a research question is asked:

What is the effect of workplace diversity on innovativeness of selected private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria?

In line with the objective of this study and in search of answer to the research question above, the following hypothesis postulated will be tested at 0.05 level of significance:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** Workplace diversity has no significant effect on innovativeness of selected private Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria.

## **Review of Literature**

The conceptual, empirical as well as the theoretical reviews are done in this section.

### **Workplace Diversity**

Workplace Diversity is a holistic concept that denotes the differences that exist between people working within and with various characteristics, such as different sex, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation. Amaliyah (2015) defined Workplace Diversity (WPD) as a concept that denotes the differences between people working in or for an organisation. This can also mean the multiplicity of differences amongst individuals and their beliefs about how they identify themselves as well as how others distinguish them in that organisation Al-Jenaibi (2017) defined workplace diversity as the ability of individuals to work together and tolerate the differences found in other individuals due to education, skill, economic and social status. According to Guillaume et al., (2017) workplace diversity is defined as an infinite number of objective and perceived differences among members of an organisational unit, such as age, nationality, and work abilities.

Problem-solving will increase when different diverse is occurring among the employees in the organisations. According to Flory, Leibbrandt et al. (2021), if a company is just beginning to recognize the potential of diversification, there will likely be challenges to creating a more diverse work environment. Old ways of thinking and entrenched prejudices may hinder your efforts and create tension and conflict. Additionally, as cultures collide, there may be mis-interpretations of meanings (Joubert, 2017). What's funny to one culture may be considered disrespectful to another. Management needs to buy in and educate employees across the board if workplace diversity is to have its first measure of success. Depending on how long you've been in business, you may have already learned a great deal about accommodations in the workplace. Just as the Americans with Disabilities Act brought significant changes to some businesses at a financial cost, so will diversity require some flexibility.

### **Innovativeness**

Innovativeness refers to the capacity employed by businesses to gain a competitive advantage and achieve improved company performance (Hilman & Kaliappen, 2015). It involves bringing something new, such as a new concept, more effective technology, or procedure, and is derived from the Latin term meaning update, improvement, and invention (Domi et al., 2019). Innovativeness is viewed as a learning process that leads to issue solving at both individual and community levels (Cohen & Caner, 2016). According to Pappu and Quester (2016) innovativeness may influence consumer brand loyalty directly because consumers view innovative brands as more capable of fulfilling their needs, and they in turn reciprocate by being more committed to such brands. Tanja (2017) provides that with innovation, businesses can initially charge higher prices for new products before competitors' products come on the market. Furthermore, Ravi & Pascale (2015) argued that innovativeness may serve as a sign affecting consumers' cognitive and emotional satisfaction, thereby indirectly affecting loyalty.

Kilic et al., (2015) defined innovativeness as the notion of openness to new ideas as an aspect of a firm's culture and propose an input based operationalisation of innovativeness. Kemal et al., (2014) defines innovativeness as the rate of adoption of innovations and indicates that it is operationalized in many studies as the number of innovations adopted within a given period. Innovation is broadly seen as an essential component for competitiveness and survival, embedded in organisational structures, processes, products, and services within the (Shashi et al., 2019). According to Ravi and Pascale (2015), perceptions of innovativeness may lead to higher consumer involvement, thereby indirectly influencing customer loyalty. Organisational innovation can be more distinguished in two aspects such as intra- organisational and inter organisational (Agnieszka & Woldu, 2012).

### **Empirical Review**

#### **Workplace Diversity and Innovativeness**

Kirop and Oduor (2017) found age diversity as a construct of workforce diversity positively affects organisational outcomes. Age diversity dimensions which were work

experience and inclusion of age groups accounted for 66.4% of the organisational performance of Elgeyo Marakwet County, Kenya. It is true that, health with different workforce from all ages leads to a better organisational outcome. This may allow the organisation to invest more and increase their performance via effective innovation compared to others. Similarly, in the study of Gellner & Veen (2013), the results showed that age heterogeneity on its own has a negative effect on individual productivity and not organisational productivity. Fadi et al., (2016) found that having a diversity of knowledge within virtual teams is noted to benefit innovation outcomes; leveraging the benefits of diversity (both deep and functional level) is likely to require a capability to facilitate collaboration among team members. Also, the study of Susan and Linda (2004) revealed that deep-level perceived similarity will interact with leader-member dyadic communication agreement in predicting group member performance ratings at later time periods in a workgroup's development. In a study which was done by (Winnie, 2008) showed that different age groups provide different values for companies and these values can complement each other's innovativeness which improve organisational performance. The study of Navjeet and Pallvi (2020) revealed that the nuances of gender diversity and inclusion that bring out their true essence in terms of creativity and innovation, productivity, decision-making, problem-solving and organisational performance as its several advantages. Workplace diversity scholar such as Yukiko (2018) found that positive relationships between managerial gender diversity and one measure of firm performance, without a long-time lag required for it to be realized.

In the study of Li et al. (2017), it was found that organisational surplus positively affects green product innovation, while there was found to be no significant influence on green process innovation. Similarly, the study of Marian et al. (2017) established that surface and deep-level diversity on R&D "innovative performance and how diversity dimensions interact to drive innovation. On the contrary, Jayne and Dipboye (2004) demonstrated that gender diversity does not inevitably provide positive outcomes such as boosting drive, enhancing abilities, consolidating obligation, improving values, and declining conflict. The negative side gender diversity delays decision making process because of internal conflict among members (Kirton & Greene, 2016). These findings are also in consonance with Mohammad (2017) whose study revealed that the organizational surplus of innovative firms surpassed that of non-innovative firms by employing propensity score matching.

### **Theoretical Review**

The Resource-Based View (RBV) is a managerial framework used to determine the strategic resources a firm can exploit to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. Barney's 1991 article "Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage" is widely cited as a pivotal work in the emergence of the resource-based view. While the primary focus of institutional theory is on organisational homogeneity, the main research question of resource-based view theory is performance heterogeneity among organisations (Barney & Clark, 2007). This perspective views of organisations consists of variety of resources, generally including four categories: physical capital, financial capital, human capital, and corporate capital resources (Barney & Clark, 2007).



Supporters of the Resource-Based View (RBV) argue that the basis of a firm's sustained competitive advantage lies in the resources and capabilities it has accumulated (Dubey et al., 2019). These resources and capabilities must be valuable, rare, and costly to imitate in order to provide a competitive advantage. A number of criticisms of RBV have been widely cited and are as follows: The RBV is tautological (Collis, 1994; Butler & Priem, 2001). Different resource configurations can generate the same value for firms and thus would not be competitive advantage (Wills-Johnson, 2008). Given the research objectives to be addressed in this study, and despite the sufficiency critics of RBV, this present study is in support of the RBV given that achieving a sustainable competitive advantage lies at the heart of much of the literature in strategic management and strategic marketing. The resource-based view offers strategists a means of evaluating potential factors that can be deployed to confer a competitive edge.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted survey research design. The population of study was 797 non-academic staff of five selected private Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The sample size of 475 was determined using research advisor table. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting respondents. A structured and validated questionnaire was used for data collection with Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the constructs which ranged between 0.716 and 0.837. The response rate was 73%. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential (multiple regression) statistics.

### **Analysis**

#### **Restatement of Research Hypothesis**

**Ho:** Workplace diversity has no significant effect on innovativeness

Multiple linear regression analysis was employed to test the hypothesis. The independent variables were workplace diversity dimensions (age, gender, ethnicity, personality and attitude), while the dependent variable was innovativeness. In the hypothesis analysis, data for workplace diversity dimensions were created by adding together responses of all the items under the various dimensions to generate independent scores for each dimension. Data for innovativeness was generated by adding together responses of all items under the variable to create index of Innovativeness. The results of the analysis and parameter estimates obtained are presented in Table 1

**Table 1:** Summary of multiple regression analysis for effect of Work diversity Dimensions on Innovativeness of Selected private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria.

N	Model	B	T	Sig.	ANOVA (Sig.)	R	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F (5, 341)
347	(Constant)	8.333	5.988	0.000	0.000 <sup>b</sup>	0.646 <sup>a</sup>	0.409	48.830
	Age Diversity	-0.123	-2.744	0.006				
	Gender Diversity	0.072	1.697	0.091				
	Ethnicity Diversity	-0.060	-1.311	0.191				
	Personal Diversity	0.203	4.319	0.000				
	Attitude	.523	10.121	0.000				
a. Dependent Variable: Innovativeness								
b. Predictors: (Constant), Attitude, Age Diversity, Ethnicity Diversity, Gender Diversity, Personal Diversity								

**Source:** Researcher's Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 shows the results of multiple linear regression analysis for the effect of workplace diversity dimensions on innovativeness of selected Private Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. According to Table 1, personal diversity ( $\beta = 0.203, t = 4.319, p < 0.05$ ) and attitude ( $\beta = 0.523, t = 10.121, p < 0.05$ ) have a positive and significant effect on innovativeness. This implied that personality diversity and attitude positively predict the innovativeness of selected Private Universities in Ogun State. The results further showed that age diversity ( $\beta = -0.123, t = -2.744, p < 0.05$ ) has a positive and significant effect on innovativeness meaning that age diversity positively influences the innovativeness of selected private universities in Ogun State. Gender diversity ( $\beta = 0.072, t = 1.697, p > 0.05$ ) has a positive but insignificant effect on innovativeness while ethnicity diversity ( $\beta = -0.060, t = -1.311, p > 0.05$ ) has a positive and insignificant effect on innovativeness of selected private universities in Ogun State. The regression analysis results indicate that three dimensions of workplace diversity, namely age diversity, personality diversity and attitude significantly influence innovativeness. This suggests that workplace diversity predict innovativeness in the selected Private Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria.

The result indicated that workplace diversity dimensions have a moderately strong positive relationship with the innovativeness of Selected Private Universities at  $R = 0.646$  (Puth, Marie-Therese et al., 2014). This indicates that workplace diversity dimensions positively influence innovativeness in the Selected Private Universities. The adjusted R-squared ( $R^2 = 0.409$ ) indicates that 40.9% variation in innovativeness of selected Private Universities can be attributed dimensions of workplace diversity that only affect innovativeness while the remaining 59.1% is attributed to other factors not included in the model. The predictive and prescriptive models from the results of the multiple regression analysis illustrated on table 4.16 are thus expressed:

$$\text{INN} = 8.333 - 0.123\text{AD} + 0.072\text{GD} - 0.060\text{ED} + 0.203\text{PD} + 0.523\text{ATT} + \mu_i \text{-----Eqn. 1}$$

(Predictive Model)

$$\text{INN} = 8.333 - 0.123\text{AD} + 0.203\text{PD} + 0.523\text{ATT} + U_i \text{-----Eqn. 2 (Prescriptive Model)}$$

Where:

- AD = Age Diversity
- GD = Gender Diversity
- ED = Ethnicity Diversity
- PD = Personality Diversity
- ATT = Attitude
- INN = Innovativeness

From the predictive regression equation established, taking all the factors (age diversity, gender diversity, ethnicity diversity, personal diversity, and attitude) constant at zero, the innovativeness of selected Private Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria would be 8.333. From the predictive model, Gender Diversity and Ethnicity Diversity did not significantly predict innovativeness of Selected Private Universities, hence were not prescribed for the selected Private Universities in Ogun State in strategic decision making. Therefore, these variables were removed from the prescriptive model. The prescriptive model showed that, if all the other variables of workplace diversity are kept constant, an increase in Age Diversity will lead to a -0.123 decrease in innovativeness of Selected Private Universities sector. A unit increase in Personality Diversity will lead to a 0.203 increase in the innovativeness of Selected Private Universities, and a unit increase in Attitude will lead to a 0.523 increase in the innovativeness of selected Private Universities. This suggests that selected Private Universities in Ogun State should pay close attention to age diversity, personality diversity, and attitude to improve their innovativeness. In addition, the F-statistics ( $df = 5, 341$ ) = 48.830 at  $p = 0.000$  ( $p < 0.05$ ) indicated that the overall model for predicting effect of workplace diversity dimensions on innovativeness. Therefore, the management of the selected private universities in Ogun State should prioritize fostering personality diversity, promoting a positive attitude, and managing age diversity effectively to enhance innovativeness. While gender and ethnicity diversity may not directly impact innovation, maintaining an inclusive and respectful work environment remains crucial for overall organisational outcomes. Based on these results, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) which states that Workplace diversity has no significant effect on innovativeness was rejected.

### Discussion of Findings

The aggregated results of the multiple regression analysis for hypothesis one revealed that workplace diversity variables (age diversity, gender diversity, ethnicity diversity, personal diversity, and attitude) have positive and significant effect on innovativeness of selected Private Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria ( $R^2 = 0.409$ ;  $df = 5, 341$ ) = 48.830 at  $p = 0.000$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, the combination of the independent sub-variables was significant in predicting innovativeness of selected Private Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria.



The result of this study aligns, with existing conceptual and empirical literature. Empirically, Fadi et al., (2016) found that having a diversity of knowledge within virtual teams is noted to benefit innovation outcomes; leveraging the benefits of diversity (both deep and functional level) is likely to require a capability to facilitate collaboration among team members. Also, the study of Susan and Linda (2004) revealed that deep-level perceived similarity will interact with leader-member dyadic communication agreement in predicting group member performance ratings at later time periods in a workgroup's development. Similarly, findings from the study of Navjeet and Pallvi (2020) revealed that the nuances of gender diversity and inclusion that bring out their true essence in terms of creativity and innovation, productivity, decision-making, problem-solving and organisational performance as its several advantages.

While the findings of Navjeet and Palliv (2020) differ from Fadi et al. (2016) because the former focussed on gender diversity and Inclusion as key to organisational growth. Despite this dissimilarity an under lining relevance of workplace diversity components on organisational outcomes can be deduced. The findings of Fadi John and Joshua (2016) are in corroboration with related studies (Huang & Hou, 2019; Li et al., 2017). These findings are also in consonance with Mohammad (2017) whose study revealed that the organizational surplus of innovative firms surpassed that of non-innovative firms by employing propensity score matching. They further observed a short-term profit-enhancing effect of a firm obtaining a patent after controlling for firm heterogeneity and the endogeneity problem.

In the study of Li et al. (2017), it was found that organisational surplus positively affects green product innovation, while there was found to be no significant influence on green process innovation. Moreover, corporate surplus positively moderates the relationship between legitimacy pressure and green product innovation. The results show that not only the single factor of external legitimacy pressure and internal surplus, but also their interaction, affects corporate green innovation practices. Similarly, the study of Marian et al. (2017) established that surface and deep-level diversity on R&D "innovative performance and how diversity dimensions interact to drive innovation. Also, findings suggest that high diversity in gender or skills in cognitively diverse teams might be negative attributes to take into consideration. Divergently, Jayne and Dipboye (2004) demonstrated that gender diversity does not inevitably provide positive outcomes such as boosting drive, enhancing abilities, consolidating obligation, improving values, and declining conflict. The negative side gender diversity delays decision making process because of internal conflict among members (Kirton & Greene, 2016).

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The empirical findings indicated that workplace diversity had a significant effect on innovativeness. The Overall findings of the study indicated that workplace diversity dimensions of age, gender, ethnicity, personality and attitude were the treasures of The Overall findings of the study indicated that workplace diversity dimensions of age, gender, ethnicity, personality and attitude were the treasures of innovativeness in selected privates Universities in Nigeria.

Based on the results of the study, the following are recommended:

- I. Universities should actively embrace and promote workplace diversity as a core value of the organisations. This involves creating policies and practices that ensure equal opportunity for all employees, regardless of their background, gender, race, ethnicity, or other characteristics.
- ii. Additionally, diversity training programs can be implemented to increase awareness and appreciation of different perspectives and cultures.
- iii. To capitalize on the significant effect of workplace diversity on innovativeness, management should foster a culture that values and rewards innovation. This can be achieved by encouraging employees to think creatively, take risks, and challenge traditional ways of doing things.
- iv. Providing resources, such as innovation labs or dedicated time for brainstorming sessions, can also support and encourage innovative thinking.

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