Effect of Workplace Diversity on Competitiveness of Selected Private Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria

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A b s t r a c t

Organisational competitiveness is critical to any institution that has quest for growth and remains sustained. Most organisations especially the universities are under intense competition which has challenged them to be positioning their focus on features that enhance the effectiveness of their institutions such as ability to motivate their staff in various ways that will place them in competitive advantage over their rivals. Despite the stiff competition, some Universities pay less attention towards workplace diversity which may lead to low competitiveness and consequently poor performance. This study investigates the effect of workplace diversity on competitiveness of selected universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. 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 Regression) statistics. The study found that workplace diversity has significant effect on competitiveness (Adj.R^2 = 0.257, $F(5, 341) = 24.988$, $p< 0.05$), The study concluded that workplace diversity has significant effect on competitiveness of selected private Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The Overall findings of the study indicated that workplace diversity dimensions of age, gender, ethnicity, personality and attitude were the treasures of competitiveness in selected privates Universities in Nigeria. Universities should leverage on the positive effect of workplace diversity on competitiveness and aim to create diverse teams that bring together individuals with different skills, backgrounds, and perspectives. Organisations should also embrace diversity in teams, and benefit from a wider range of insights and approaches, leading to more comprehensive and effective problem-solving and decision-making. Additionally, diversity training programs can be implemented to increase awareness and appreciation of different perspectives and cultures.

Keywords: *Attitude, Ethnicity, Gender, Competitiveness, Personality, Workplace diversity*

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Background to the Study

The performance of any organisation is dependent on the competitiveness of such institution especially in highly competitive environment as Nigerian universities are striving hard towards students' enrolment, meeting the regulatory body's requirement; National University Commission (NUC). This could be possible with a proper application and management of workplace diversity. To this end, workplace diversity is assumed not only as an essential supplement, but a driver for universities seeking for enhancement in competitiveness within the sector, thus the need for this study.

Gobally workplace diversity is a critical construct that needs attention for organizational survival. The percentage of women in these workforces increased by less than 2% (Velinov, 2019). According to the gender and race reports, the majority of these ladies were White (Stevens, 2020). However, the gender data excludes transgender or gender non - conforming personnel, and just one of the ten organisations provided non-binary employee demographics (Coster et al, 2020). During the same period, the percentage of black employees increased by less than 3%, the number of Hispanic employees increased by about 1%, and the number of Indigenous employees decreased by about 0.01 percent, while diversity data also showed that Asian employees was made up about 30% of tech workforces in 2019 (Stevens, 2020). These figures demonstrated the United States' weak workforce diversity management (Evans, 2020). Competitiveness among organisations in the United Kingdom (UK) was affected negatively due to some factors. Firstly, Brexit had a significant impact on the UK's international competitiveness, with businesses facing increased costs due to tariffs, taxes, and other trade restrictions.

Diversity in Kenya is hampered by organisational rudeness and the discrimination workers experience (Cletus et al, 2018). Workplace discrimination has stunted employee morale, team building, profit growth, and workplace innovation (Adeoye, 2019; Gabriel & John-Eke, 2019). To take advantage of or maximize the benefits of workplace diversity, the institution must address these issues (Bana, 2019). In order to foster acceptance, productivity, and potential profit growth, this should foster effective communication and team building at work (Akpakip, 2017). The lack of diversity in Nigeria is also due to a number of cultural, economic, and political factors. For example, Nigeria is a largely patriarchal society, which means that women and people from minority backgrounds are not given the same opportunities as men. Again, lack of educational opportunities in the country means that many are not able to access quality education, which is necessary to access higher-paying jobs. Moreso, the high level of poverty in Nigeria has meant that many are not able to access the resources necessary to pursue higher education or training. As such, this has created a situation where people from different backgrounds are not given the same opportunities and therefore, the levels of diversity in Nigeria are low (Ahmed & Bukar, 2020).

In the Nigerian context, it is posited that diversity management can make a difference at organisational and national levels (Kundu & Mor, 2017). Nigeria's low survey score is reflective of the several challenges of managing Diversity and Inclusion (D & I) in a country characterised by multiple diversities, yet with conspicuously weak or non-existing institutional

arrangements to effectively handle diversity in the workplace. Nigeria is known to be the giant of Africa with a population of over 180 million people and more than half the population consists of people of working age (Akinnusi et al., 2017; Ohunakin et al., 2019). Makhdoomi & Nika (2017) said so long as individuals with differences working the same environment, diversity in the workplace will always be an issue. Though our differences can promote creativity and increase satisfaction at workplace nonetheless, they can be the root of conflict and frustration between groups (Makhdoomi & Nika, 2017).

The difference in managing the outcome of diversity in workplace in different geographical locations has become a serious challenge, especially in private universities. Workplace diversity is responsible greatly to provide good relationship for the success of the organisation (Ozgen et al., 2017; Ng, & Sears, 2020; Holbrook et al., 2019). Several studies have been conducted on workplace diversity components and competitiveness (Onah & Tamunomiebi, 2019; Elizabeth, 2014; Jabeen & Khan, 2019), diversity management strategies on employee retention (Chinedu & Nnadi,2019; Higgwe et al., 2019), value of top management team diversity in driving strategic change, strategic leadership and its impact on performance of firms (Gachugu et al., 2018), influence of recruitment and selection on diversity management among state corporation in Mombasa (Ali, 2019). Nevertheless, none of these studies investigated the effect of workplace diversity components on competitiveness of private universities in Nigeria. According to Porter (2011), from a microeconomics perspective, competition can be influenced by five basic factors: product features, the number of sellers, barriers to entry, information availability, and location. From the forgoing, this study investigates the effect of workplace diversity on competitiveness of selected private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The research question and hypothesis to achieve the objective follows;

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

Research Hypothesis
H_{03}:   Workplace diversity has no significant effect on competitiveness 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 (WPD) is a concept denotes the differences between people working in or for an organisation (Amaliyah, 2015). Workplace diversity is the difference and similarity existing among employees in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, nationalities etc. It also encompasses the differences existing in firm's departments, divisions and subsidiaries domiciled in different regions or nations. Workplace diversity brings the best talents and differences around the world for productivity and business performance (Mollel et al., 2015).

Workplace diversity enhances innovation and creativity inside the organisation and leads to more effective problem-solving since a more diverse workplace provides a variety of perspectives and a higher number of alternatives. Workplace diversity as a process aimed at maintaining and creating a positive work environment, where all individual differences and similarities are valued in a way so that the contribution of all the individuals can be maximized in achieving the organisation's strategic objectives and goal. (Naushad & Nisha, 2023)

The transition to a diverse workplace can be difficult; employers across the country and the globe are making moves to diversify (Scarborough et al., 2019). They're finding it's worth the effort and the investment and that the results are both morally and financially rewarding. Diversity in the workplace requires a commitment from every level of the chain of command for it to be a successful experience. We live in a society that expects instant results and diversity can provide unique perspectives, but it may take time for revenue and productivity increases to arrive. Many initiatives stop before they can be successful because there is a lack of patience with this process (Ng & Sears, 2020). Workplace diversity is defined as the co-existence of individuals from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds working together to achieve al goals and objectives. Also, it is all about creating an inclusive environment to accept every individual's differences and understanding their differences to enable all employees achieving their full potentials which as a result allow business to reach its fullest possibility.

Competitiveness
According Stawasz (2019), competitiveness is defined as the ability to design, manufacture and sell products and services on the market where similar products and services are offered by other business entities. Competitiveness is a feature of an efficiently operating enterprise which is related to the process of competition in which companies compete with one another (Liao et al., 2015). Sipa et al. (2015) opined that competitiveness of companies is defined as their ability to function in a competitive environment in which other entities operate. Porter (1985) defined competitiveness as implementation of value creating strategy by a company and not simultaneously implemented by competitor and this strategy is not easily duplicated. Furthermore, Porter et al. (2012) mentioned that competitiveness is achieved through availability of skills, infrastructure, capital, innovation and entrepreneurism.

Ahmedova (2015) argued that one of the characteristic features of competitiveness is that it triggers organisations to compete for market share in the same way those other firms do. Baporikar (2019) contends that SME needs to improve competitiveness to survive in a changing environment and strong business competition. Khakimov et al., (2018) found competitiveness of SME could increase their bargaining position in business competition. According to Kaur, Kumar and Kumar (2017), business knowledge for shaping the competitiveness of small enterprises forces the company management to face challenges and develop solution strategies. Competitiveness is a driving factor that makes people work very hard, fosters personal and organisational development (Domazet et al., 2018)

Empirical Review
Workplace Diversity and Competitiveness
Previous studies have emphasized that firms that achieves significant operational efficiency on a regular basis have positioned themselves to achieve high level of competitive advantage (Gunasekaran, Subramanian & Papadopoulos, 2017; West, Ford & Ibrahim, 2015) which is essential for al stability. This argument was built on the assumption that competitiveness is linked to the development of a competitive advantage and is often conceptualized as the capacity of the organisation to efficiently amalgamate its resources and capabilities seeking to create value-adding, hard-to duplicate competencies (Lafuente et al., 2020). Kirop and Oduor (2017) found age diversity as a construct of workforce diversity positively affects organisational performance.

The study of Marian Garcia, Martinez, Teresa and Marco (2017) investigates the impact of surface and deep-level diversity on Research and Development (R & D) innovative performance and how diversity dimensions interact to drive innovation. The study found supportive evidence that R&D team characteristics influence innovation outcomes, confirming our hypothesising that diversity is a valuable strategy for an to pursue as it provides greater cognitive ability. Each diversity facet however has its own distinct effects depending on the novelty of innovation and industry. 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.

Theoretical Review
Dynamic Capability Theory
In this theory, dynamic capability is the capability of an organisation to purposefully adapt an organisation's resource base. The concept was defined by David et al. (1997) paper Dynamic Capabilities and Strategic Management, as the firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competences to address rapidly changing environments. The term is often used in the plural form, dynamic capabilities, emphasizing that the ability to react adequately and timely to external changes requires a combination of multiple capabilities. The earlier published work was by Teece and Pisano (1997) which provided a robust justification for the relationship of its assumptions and to respond to critics. Dynamic capability, according to Teece (2014), reflects the capacity of an organisation to incorporate, construct, and reconfigure internal and external competencies (workforce inclusive) to meet the rapidly changing setting. Teece designed the DCT on three assumptions, namely adaptive, absorptive and innovative capabilities, as these are considered critical dynamic capabilities at the industry level (Kaur & Mehta, 2016a; 2016b; 2017; Onn & Butt, 2015; Wang, Senaratne, & Rafiq, 2015).

While researchers agree that the company's dynamic capabilities may contribute positively to the company's success, there is no clear empirical evidence in the research literature that supports this concept (Giniuniene & Jurksiene 2015; Laaksonen & Peltoniemi, 2016; Mu, 2017). In addition, Drnevich and Kriauciunas (2011) argued that it would be possible to find some disadvantages of dynamic capabilities. These involve the inability to integrate complex

capacities into the firm's internal processes. In addition, the difficulty of the use of dynamic capabilities and the need for comprehensive large-scale management will result in unnecessary changes (Drnevich & Kriauciunas, 2011).

Despite these DCT constraints and critiques, many researchers felt that dynamic capabilities are the keys to competitive advantage, especially in a dynamic world Wamba et al., (2017), Lin et al. (2016), Schilke et al., (2018), MacLean et al. (2015), Braganza et al., (2017) and Kurtmollaiev (2020). In addition, dynamic capacity has played a critical role in an enterprise as it emphasizes the accumulation of expertise incorporated in a business and is directly related to its financial performance Teece, (2018), Tallman, (2015), Schoemaker et al. (2018), Helfat and Peteraf (2015) and Felin and Powell (2016). Regardless of the critiques of the dynamic capability theory, researchers have given tremendous support of the theory as confirmed by different studies such as Lin et al., (2016), Schilke et al. (2018), MacLean et al., (2015), Ali, Braganza, Brooks, Moro and Nepelski, (2017).

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

H_0: Workplace diversity has no significant effect on competitiveness.

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 competitiveness. 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 competiveness 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 below.

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

N	Model	*B*	T	Sig.	ANOVA (Sig.)	R	Adjusted R^2	F (5,341)
347	(Constant)	12.915	9.693	.000	0.000^b	.518^a	0.257	24.988
	Age Diversity	.011	.253	.801				
	Gender Diversity	-.057	-1.411	.159				
	Ethnicity Diversity	-.016	-.358	.721				
	Personal Diversity	.158	3.499	.001				
	Attitude	.377	7.615	.000				
	a. Dependent Variable: Competitiveness							
	b. Predictors: (Constant), Attitude, Age Diversity, Ethnicity Diversity, Gender Diversity, Personal Diversity							

Source: Researchers' Field Survey, 2023

Interpretation

Table 1 presents the results of a multiple regression analysis examining the effect of workplace diversity dimensions on competitiveness in selected private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. According to Table 1, the constant term in the regression model is 12.915, which represents the expected value of competitiveness when all predictor variables are set to zero. The t-values and associated p-values provide insights into the individual contributions of each predictor variable to competitiveness. The results show that personal diversity ($\beta = 0.158$, t = 3.499, p = 0.001) and attitude ($\beta = 0.377$, t = 7.615, p < 0.001) have a positive and significant effect on competitiveness. This indicates that personality diversity and attitude positively predict the level of competitiveness in the selected private universities in Ogun State. However, age diversity ($\beta = 0.011$, t = 0.253, p = 0.801), gender diversity ($\beta = -0.057$, t = -1.411, p = 0.159), and ethnicity diversity ($\beta = -0.016$, t = -0.358, p = 0.721) do not show significant relationships with competitiveness. These results suggest that age diversity, gender diversity, and ethnicity diversity may not have a substantial impact on the competitiveness of the selected private universities.

According to table 1, workplace diversity dimensions have a moderately strong positive relationship with the competitiveness of Selected Private Universities at *R*= 0.518 (Puth, Marie-Therese et al., 2014). This indicates that work diversity dimensions positively influence competitiveness in the Selected Private Universities. The adjusted R-squared ($R^{-2} = 0.257$) indicates that 25.7% variation in competitiveness of selected Private Universities can be attributed dimensions of workplace diversity that only affect competitiveness while the remaining 74.3% 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 4.18 are thus expressed:

COMP = 12.915 + 0.011AD + -0.057GD + -0.016ED + 0.158PD + 0.377ATT + μ_i --------Eqn. 1 (Predictive Model)

COMP = 12.915 + 0.158PD + 0.377ATT + μ_i-------- U_i ------Eqn. 2 (Prescriptive Model)

Where:
      AD = Age Diversity
      GD = Gender Diversity
      ED = Ethnicity Diversity
      PD = Personal Diversity
      ATT = Attitude
      COMP = Competitiveness

From the predictive regression equation established, taking all the factors (age diversity, gender diversity, ethnicity diversity, personal diversity, and attitude) constant at zero, the competitiveness of selected Private Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria would be 12.915. From the predictive model, Age Diversity, Gender Diversity and Ethnicity Diversity did not significantly predict competitiveness 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 would lead to a 0.011 increase in competitiveness of Selected Private Universities sector. A unit increase in Gender Diversity will lead to a -0.057 decrease in the competitiveness of Selected Private Universities. A unit increase in Ethnicity Diversity will lead to a -0.016 decrease in the competitiveness of Selected Private Universities. A unit increase in Personal Diversity will lead to a 0.158 increase in the competitiveness of Selected Private Universities, and a unit increase in Attitude will lead to a 0.377 increase in the competitiveness of selected Private Universities. This suggests that selected Private Universities in Ogun State should pay close attention to personal diversity and attitude to improve their competitiveness. In addition, the F-statistics (df = 5, 341) = 24.988 at p = 0.000 (p<0.05) indicated that the overall model for predicting effect of workplace diversity dimensions on competitiveness. Therefore, the management of the selected private universities in Ogun State should prioritize fostering personal diversity, promoting a positive attitude, and managing attitude effectively to enhance competitiveness. While age diversity, gender diversity and ethnicity diversity may not directly impact competitiveness, maintaining an inclusive and respectful work environment remains crucial for overall organisational success. Based on these results, the null hypothesis (H_o3) which states that Workplace diversity has no significant effect on competitiveness was rejected.

Discussion of Findings
The aggregated results of the multiple regression analysis for hypothesis three revealed that workplace diversity variables (age diversity, gender diversity, ethnicity diversity, personal diversity, and attitude) have positive and significant effect on competitiveness of selected Private Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria (R^2 = 0.257; df = 5, 341) = 24.988 at p = 0.000

(p<0.05). Thus, the combination of the independent sub-variables was significant in predicting competitiveness of selected Private Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Supporting the above result, Kirop and Oduor (2017) found age diversity as a construct of workforce diversity positively affects organisational performance. Age diversity dimensions which are 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 organisations to invest more and increase their performance 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. Kirop and Oduor (2017) found age diversity as a construct of workforce diversity positively affects organisational performance.

Moreover, in the case of routine tasks, there are no substantial gains from age heterogeneity that could offset the increasing costs resulting from greater age heterogeneity. Thus, in organisations with usual kind of work, increasing age heterogeneity will lead to a decline in al performance. Different researchers who conducted their research in western part came out that older and younger employees must come together to form rational and viable corporate culture in the organisation. These values which are possessed by different age groups can complement each other in s and will tend to achieve better al performance. 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 which improve al performance.

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. Furthermore, manufacturing firms benefit significantly and sensitively to a greater extent from increasing managerial gender diversity as compared to those in the service industries, and moreover the curvature of this relationship is significantly greater for manufacturers. Likewise, the results of Yukiko (2018) differ from Hughes, Lee, Tian, Newman and Legood (2018) because the former concentrated on the relationship between managerial gender diversity and firm performance. Despite this dissimilarity, it is possible to deduce the focus on the organisational result of workplace diversity components. The study of Hughes et al. (2018) established that creativity and Innovation are vital for organisational success, and leadership was considered to be a major contextual factor that influences employee creativity and innovation.

Hughes et al. (2018) revealed a positive relationship between High Performance Work System (HPWS) and a number of al outcomes. The results showed a direct and positive relationship between HPWS and all three dependent variables (employee, team, and organisational creativity and innovation). More specifically, HPWS was positively related to employee performance, HR performance, and organisational performance. Conversely, the findigs of Dimnwobi et al. (2016) reveals that Nigeria has a very low degree of creativity, innovation and competitiveness, when compared to other nations and this poses a threat to the diversification of the Nigerian economy.

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 competitiveness 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 leverage the positive effect of workplace diversity on competitiveness, Universities should aim to create diverse teams that bring together individuals with different skills, backgrounds, and perspectives.

iv. By embracing diversity in teams, organisations can benefit from a wider range of insights and approaches, leading to more comprehensive and effective problem-solving and decision-making.

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