WORKFORCE DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT AND CORPORATE PERFORMANCE OF FIRMS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This Study empirically examined the nature of the relationship between Workforce Diversity Management and Corporate Performance of manufacturing firms in Nigeria. Despite efforts aimed at optimizing the performance of firms in Nigeria, a nation of many diverse people, not much appears to have been achieved. To address this lacuna, primary data was collected from Forty-two registered firms in South-South Nigeria using a five-point Likert-type scale questionnaire and personal interviews. The Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient at 95% confidence level and the Hierarchical Multiple Regression model were used to analyse the data. The findings revealed that the apparent low performance rate of the Study firms may be traceable to poor management of surface and deep level diversity. To optimize Corporate Performance therefore, it was recommended that managers should ensure that employees are "not at all" disturbed by issues bothering on diversity as raised in this Paper.*

KEYWORDS: Workforce diversity, Ethnicity, Gender, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is often regarded as one of the most populous industrially developing nations in the world and richly endowed with abundant human and natural resources. However, most of the economic drawbacks of the nation may be attributable to the apparent inability of the organizations to perform optimally. No matter the type of organization, chances are that people's actions, inactions or counteractions could be a threat to its corporate performance, existence and ultimate survival. It has been opined that many modern work organizations have people of variegated cultural backgrounds working together as employees which may be a potential source of organizational conflict (Ukachukwu and Iherionhamma, 2013). Again, diversity in the personality and other dimensions of diversity could also affect employee behavioural outcomes (Afolabi and Omole, 2011) Thus managers will need to understand a wide range of behaviours to bring out the best in the distinctive competences of the workforce. Recognizing that the survival of their organizations is crucial to the economic health and instrumental to the strategic positioning of their countries in the comity of nations, managers who understand that the task of surviving in today's world is an enormous one, are most likely to ensure that the best persons are selected and maintained for the optimum performance of their organizations. If and when these 'best persons' come into the organizations, how well the various dimensions of their diversity are

consciously managed leaves much to be desired. The proper management of workforce diversity therefore becomes an essential concern to strategic individuals and groups at the workplace.

In the light of the present realities facing organizations today, it may be inferred that workforce diversity may create opportunities as well as pose challenges for the functioning and behaviour of organizations. In Nigeria, a Nation with several ethnic nationalities and languages, as well as diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, the issue of proper workforce diversity management should even be more important to managers. *Ceteris Paribus* and assuming that talent, ability and other desirable characteristics are equally distributed throughout a nation's population and everyone has equal opportunity to work in organizations, then there should be persons of various dimensions of diversity at every level in organizations. In Nigeria where the population is about one hundred and sixty million persons of which more than half are of working age, Managers of work organizations will then be faced with a critical challenge of the proper management of diversity in the work place.

In studies into areas relating to obtaining the best of the people in organizations, the scholars appear to be oblivious of the importance of managing diversity of their workforce. These critics of the business case for the management of workforce diversity believe that the organizational benefit to be gained from workforce diversity management are too narrow or short-lived and that such benefits might be partial rather than comprehensive. For this reason, scholars and managers of such opposing view seem to pay little attention to the issue of managing the physiological and psychological differences in human qualities and idiosyncrasies which are reflected in demographic differences in terms of gender, age, physical ability, ethnicity, educational qualifications or functional background as well as other areas which bother on personality issues such as locus of control, attitudes, values and perception.

Managers also fail to surmount the behavioural challenges as presented by the array of diversity in their workforce. In a country with such array of diversity, it will be interesting to know how employees behave towards each other as individuals and as groups; how these behaviours will affect the overall organizations performance; the opportunities as well as the challenges of workforce diversity management in organizations and the strategies Nigerian managers could adopt to ensure that corporate performance reaches the optimum and remains there, through the proper management of workforce diversity.

 Sequel to the foregoing argument therefore, it may be reasonable to presume that the optimum performance in organizations will be achieved, if managers understood the importance of properly managing the diversity of the people in their organizations. Many studies on workforce diversity have looked at its dimensions with the aim of getting statistics of the issues. It must however be highlighted that those with interest of studying measures of organizational performance tend to delve into areas such as marketing strategies as well as accounting and financial policies. In spite of these theoretical and practical attempts to improve corporate performance they appear to be inadequate to address the issue of firms' optimum performance.

However, this present study intends to close the gap in literature by scientifically examining the nature of the relationship between Workforce Diversity Management and Corporate Performance, with a view to bringing to the fore its implications for managers and other policy formulators as well as making suggestions that will help obtain the much desired optimum performance.

LITERATURE/ THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

A plethora of theories implicate workforce diversity and corporate performance. However this work drew heavily from the Social Identity theory. The Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978) asserts that group membership can enhance ways individuals behave within the in-group, but often at the expense of those considered as those in the out-group. The theory is concerned with the existence of multiple identities, the variability of the degree to which people identify with a social group and the role of the social context in social identification (Deazux, 1993). This theory does not only explain one's self concept, but it also address the ways in which people view others. As group members are motivated to maintain their social identities, they tend to exhibit a favorable bias towards others who appear to have similar characteristics (Tajfel and Turner, 2004; Turner and Haslam, 2001). It is the quests for positive distinctiveness which social identity theory proposes that underlies many of the behavioural, evaluative and perceptual biases which are frequently observed in inter group contexts.

Individuals tend to develop a lot of identities as they move through the stages of their lives. They tend to define themselves in terms of their gender, religion, ethnicity, age, background or profession and "put on" different identities in different circumstances. In line with this thinking, Osaghae and Suberu (2005) observe that in Nigeria , by virtue of its complex web of politically salient identities and history of chronic and seemingly intractable conflicts and instability, competing groups tend to adopt exclusionary, winner-take-all strategies ,with persons having crisscrossing and recursive identities of which the ethnic, religious, regional and sub-ethnic (communal) appear to be the most salient. Thus, members of a group can decide to identify themselves as 'religious' rather than 'ethnic', as individuals and groups may do from time to time, depending on the level and scope of conflict or uncertainty.

Strong group identification can predict whether discriminatory behaviour will or will not occur within a work setting particularly with regard to diversity. Mustapha (2005), ethno-linguistic and regional identities remain strong in Nigeria as private sector bureaucracies in the media, banks, the formal sector economy, and even civil society, continue to manifest considerable ethnic bias. Explanations of prejudice and discrimination focus on how being a member of a specific group helps to magnify one's sense of self esteem.

WORKFORCE DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

Traditionally, the term diversity has been widely used to refer to the demographic composition of a workforce. Some studies have looked at diversity using the compositional approach, otherwise known as Surface-level diversity (SLD) or demographic diversity, which refers to the extent to which a unit is heterogeneous on characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, religion, age, functional background, and organizational tenure (Tsui and Gutek, 2000; Fajana, *et. al*,2011). In addition to the surface-level composition of the group, deep-level diversity (DLD), otherwise seen as differences with respect to attitudes, personality, and values, has also been investigated (Barrick, *et.al*, 1998; Harrison, *et. al*, 2002; Thatcher, *et. al*. 2003).

Workforce Diversity Management is the ability of a manager to achieve success for an organization by making the best of use of the similarities and differences among employees in terms of age, cultural background, physical abilities and disabilities, race, ethnicity, religion, sex, as well as in terms of personality, values, attitudes, perception and cognitive style. Individuals who think towards deep level diversity are more likely to perceive themselves as similar, rather than dissimilar, to members of their workgroup on unobservable qualities (Liao, *et. al,* 2008).

To Daft (2008) Workforce diversity refers to a workforce made up of people with different human qualities or who belong to various cultural groups. The author regarded individual diversity to include people different from themselves along the dimensions such as social background. Workforce diversity as noted by Robbins and Judge (2011) acknowledges a workforce which comprised women and men. As the authors went on to observe, these individuals with variety of physical or psychological abilities. Diversity management is about finding ways to get the diverse contributions from employees.

It may seem that the dynamics of diversity are especially salient in teams. This may be because it has been observed that where the level of face-to-face interaction is high, members often rely on one another to perform their tasks effectively (Tsui and Gutek, 2000). Indeed, empirical research in organizational and laboratory settings suggests that diversity make a difference for group outcomes and significantly affect the experiences of the individuals within the team (Harrison *et.al,* 2002; Jackson, *et.al,* 2003).

However, Diversity management issues abound in organizations and it is expedient that they are proactively identified and appropriately addressed. Prejudice and discrimination seem to be alive more in settings where there are diverse sets of persons. The contemporary Nigerian workplace may be a typical example. In this study, the management of workforce diversity was examined in terms of the management of the surface-level diversity dimension of gender, ethnicity and religion on the one hand; and the management of deep-level diversity dimension focusing on the effects of an individual's level of perceived equity and locus of control on the performance of organizations, on the other hand. This is the extent to which employees are bothered about issues of surface- and deep- level diversity. A situation in which employees are bothered about issues of surface and deep level diversity "to a very great extent" may be an extreme indication of

improper/poor workforce diversity management while when they are "not at all" bothered may be an extreme indication of proper workforce diversity management.

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE

When organizations come into existence, the likelihood in that there is a reason for its existence and there is at least a desired future state that the organization attempts to realize. How well the organization fairs with regards to its goal attainment is its performance (Stoner, *et.al,* 2006).The authors are of the view that organizational performance is the measure of how well an organization does its job. In other words the organization attempts to assess how well it achieves its appropriate objectives. Corporate performance is the ability of an organization to achieve results and attain its goals by making effective use of resources available to it (Wokoma, and Iheriohanma, 2010). The concept of performance cuts across all spheres of operation within and outside the organization. In business, the analysis of performance whether financial, production, marketing, managerial, or in general activities, is very necessary because the outcome of the present decisions lie in the projection of the future (Oparanma, 2010).

For many organizations, the measurement of performance is a constant, on-going activity. The use of business performance dashboards are increasingly being used as a way for executives to keep track of key performance metrics as sales in relation to targets, number of products on back order, or percentage of customer service calls resolved with specified times periods (Bartholomew 2005).The author suggests that dashboards when deployed throughout an organization for each employee will help to track progress towards goals to spot performance gaps and device innovative strategies to get back on course. Ojo (2011) identified empirical studies on corporate performance as coming from disciplines such as industrial economics, strategic management, accounting and   finance. Thus the focus in each situation appears to depend on who is carrying out the evaluation and the purpose.

Corporate Performance is a firm's ability to obtain favourable outcomes in terms of its level of productivity, profitability, rate of employee turnover and innovativeness.

METHODOLOGY

The cross- sectional survey design was adopted for analyzing the primary data. The desk research was adopted in the collection of the secondary data. To analyze the primary data, copies of the questionnaire were sent to each of the firms in the sample, with the aim that at least one copy will be filled by a manager who rose through the ranks or still has a opportunity for advancement or promotion in his/her organization. Personal interviews were held in a non-contrived setting. More data on gender, ethnicity and religion as well as data on corporate performance indices were obtained from file reports and annual reports. This research was limited to manufacturing firms in the South-South geo-political region of Nigeria. To select a sample from a population of Seventy Firms (70) ,being the total number of firms registered by the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (M.A.N.) in the South–South Geo-political Region.

The Krejcie and Morgan (1970) model for sample size determination was used to get a sample size was fifty –nine (59) respondents.

To indicate the meaning of the variables as they are functionally applied in this study, the operational definitions of variables are given below as predictor, criterion and moderating variables. To measure the Predictor Variable, the research data for this study was generated using a five point Likert – type scale instrument design. The scale ranged from 'Not at all' or the least degree of occurrence to 'To a very great extent' or the highest degree of occurrence . The Predictor variable, Workforce Diversity Management was operationally measured as the extent to which employees are disturbed by issues of surface- and deep -level Diversity. To measure the Criterion Variable for this Study, Productivity was seen as the firm's output level; the Profitability was seen as the firm's ability to meet and exceed financial benchmarks; Employee Turnover rate was operationally measured as the rate at which employees leave the firm; Innovativeness was measured in terms of the amount of new ideas, including products (especially as suggested by employees) the firms comes out with. To measure the Moderating Variables, this Study looked at the works of Katzell, Evans, and Korman,(1974) which measured Employees' perceptions of the opportunities for advancement with a 4-item scale . ". In this Study, Five- items, including items such as "to what extent could formal reporting relationships be altered in your firm?" were developed to measure the extent to which corporate Structure moderated the effect of Workforce diversity management on corporate performance; "to what extent do you think policies and programmes in your organization bring people closer together?"The items took cognizance of the peculiarities of the study scope.To ensure internal reliability, the survey instrument was assessed by means of Cronbach Alpha coefficients, using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Items that return alpha values of 0.7 and above were be considered as reliable.

DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

The descriptive statistics which deals with the presentation of demographic and other related data of this study was done through the use of frequency tables and charts. However, for inferential purposes and the empirical evaluation of the variables (predictor and criterion) of this study, two tools were used. The Spearman's Rank order Correlation Coefficient (Rho or r_s) On the other hand, the Hierarchical Multiple Regression Model was used to ascertain the moderating impact of Corporate Structure and Corporate Culture on Workforce Diversity Management and Corporate Performance .Note that the moderating impact of each moderating variable was analyzed separately on the predictor and criterion variables. To address the issues of multicollinearity, the variables were standardized to create *Z score* variables before they were analyzed. A collinearity diagnosis was done to see the level of tolerance of the variables. An Analysis of Variance was also carried out to determine a model fit of all the variables.

RESULTS/ FINDINGS

The findings of this study as revealed by the results indicate that Surface- and Deep -level diversity management were inversely related to corporate productivity ,profitability and firms

innovativeness but directly related to employee turnover rate (see table 1).In other words, the more employees were bothered about Surface- and Deep -level diversity issues, the more Corporate performance was affected negatively. The result of the Hierarchical Regression Method of data analysis to examine the impact of the effect of Corporate Structure and Culture on the relationship between Workforce Diversity Management and Corporate Performance, also showed a very significant moderating effect (See Tables 2 and 3).

Table1: SHOWS THE SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF CORRELATION ANALYSIS (SPEARMAN'rho)

Correlations

			SLD	DLD	PRODUCTIVITY	PROFITABILITY	EMPLOYEE TURNOVER RATE	INNOVATIVENESS
Spearman's rho	SLD	Correlation Coefficient	1.000		-.719**	-.546**	.536**	-.328*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.		.000	.000	.000	.034
		N	42		42	42	42	42
	DLD	Correlation Coefficient		1.000	-.619**	-.557**	.597**	-.426**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.	.000	.000	.000	.005
		N		42	42	42	42	42
	PRODUCTIVITY	Correlation Coefficient	-.719**	-.619**	1.000			
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.			
		N	42	42	42			
	PROFITABILITY	Correlation Coefficient	-.546**	-.557**		1.000		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.018	.000		.		
		N	42	42		42		
	EMPLOYEE TURNOVER RATE	Correlation Coefficient	.536**	.597**			1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000			.	
		N	42	42			42	
	INNOVATIVENESS	Correlation Coefficient	-.328*	-.426**				1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.034	.005				.
		N	42	42				42

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researchers Survey Data.

Table 2: Shows the Hierarchical Multiple Regression Model Summary (Structure Moderating)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df 1	df 2	Sig. F Change
1	.859a	.737	.724	1.23485	.737	54.761	2	39	.000
2	.889b	.790	.774	1.11765	.053	9.608	1	38	.004

a. Predictors: (Constant), Structure, WorkforceDiversityMgt

b. Predictors: (Constant), Structure, WorkforceDiversityMgt, The moderating impact of Corporate Structure

Source: Researchers Survey Data

Table 3: Shows the Hierarchical Multiple Regression Model Summary (Culture Moderating)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df 1	df 2	Sig. F Change
1	.860[a]	.739	.725	1.23167	.739	55.145	2	39	.000
2	.894[b]	.799	.784	1.09344	.061	11.484	1	38	.002

a. Predictors: (Constant), Culture, WorkforceDiversity Mgt

b. Predictors: (Constant), Culture, WorkforceDiversity Mgt, The moderating impact of Corporate Culture

Source: Researchers Survey Data

DISCUSSION

Gender, ethnicity and religion were studied as surface level dimensions of diversity management while deep level diversity management dimension was looked at in terms of individual's locus of control and the perception of the equity level in the firm. This was done *vis- à -vis* the measures of corporate performance which was looked at in terms of its productivity, profitability, rate of employee turnover and innovativeness.

It has been observed that group differences and histories are accentuated as "us" versus "them" tension often increases infighting that interferes with progress (Phelps, 1997). Nigeria is easily described as a multi-lingual and multi-ethnic Nation. Although, the actual figure for the total number of ethnic groups in Nigeria appears elusive as estimates seem to vary widely depending on the criteria used, Otite (2000) provides a tentative figure of more than 389 ethnic groups. In this study, it was observed that even in firms where a minority ethnic group seems to be in the majority, there may be other differences which vary along such subgroups dimensions as dialect, village, clan and kin group all of which tend to create tension. As far as tension often increases infighting, the firms' productivity will likely be affected negatively.

A firm's degree of innovativeness is crucial for its sustainability and growth. It has been observed that women with high self-efficacy and internal locus of control scored higher on entrepreneurial innovative behaviour than women with low self-efficacy and external locus of control (Babalola, 2009).However, When employees sense that being a member of a group appear to be instrumental to gaining organizational favours, there may be a loss of confidence in his ability to attain preferred heights in the firm , whether he/she has an internal locus of control or not (Langer and Ukiwo, 2007). This study posits that the greater the extents to which employees are disturbed by issues of their diversity the more negative the effect on Corporate Performance.

IMPLICATION TO RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

i.   This study makes a strong business case for the management of workforce diversity as a means of achieving optimum Corporate Performance.

ii   This study contributes to the knowledge of the nature of the relationship between Workforce Diversity Management and Corporate Performance.

iii.   This Study contributes to corporate policy formulation and implementation in the areas of corporate structure and culture as well as in management of a diverse workforce.

iv.   This study is perhaps a novel platform on which to harness Nigeria's much desired "unity in diversity" to achieve high performing firms for the economic wellbeing of the Nation.

CONCLUSION

The study investigated Workforce Diversity Management and Corporate Performance in manufacturing firms in Nigeria.

In line with the findings of this study and on the works of other authorities as discussed in this study, the following conclusions are made:

1.   Workforce diversity management has a significant inverse relationship with corporate performance.

2.   An effective corporate structure that shows that formal reporting and communication relationships appear to be followed will significantly moderate the inverse relationship between workforce diversity management and corporate performance.

3.   A corporate culture that stresses warmth and reduce tension and anxiety will moderate the inverse relationship between workforce diversity management and corporate performance to a significant extent.

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, it is recommended that each interest group should be accommodated in firms' policies to ensure that employees are "not at all" disturbed by surface-and deep –level diversity issues. Firms' policies should not leave anyone with any perception of inequity nor remind employees of any form of difference but should be hinged on equity and justice. Management level employees should take the lead and demonstrate high commitment to workplace diversity management intervention strategies and compulsory diversity training should be done for all employees.

FUTURE RESEARCH

i.   Workforce Diversity Management could be studied in the Nigerian Civil Service.

ii.   Similar studies could also be undertaking in Countries with a vast array of diversity.

iii.   Similar studies could be embarked upon with other sub-dimensions of Surface and Deep Level Diversity Management dimensions.

iv.   Workforce Diversity Management could be correlated with other criterion variables.

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