

## CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN ADAMAWA STATE UNIVERSITY MUBI

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### ABSTRACT

*The objective of this study was to examine the effect of employee cultural diversity on organizational performance at Adamawa State University Mubi. The study adopted a survey research design and collected primary data in a cross-sectional survey. The population of the study 824, comprising 232 academic staff and 592 non-academic staff of different cadres. The sample size for this study was 269 which was determined using Taro Yemani Formula. Convenience was used to arrive at the test units this study. A questionnaire served as the research instrument. Quantitative data collected were coded into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0, cross-checked for entry errors, and analysed. Regression analysis was used to test the relationship between dimensions of the independent variable and the dependent variable. The study found positive and statistically significant effect employee cultural diversity (language diversity, value diversity and religious diversity) on organizational performance. The study concludes that organizational performance at Adamawa State University Mubi depends on language diversity, value diversity and religious diversity of employees and recommends that management Adamawa State University Mubi should maintain standard and generally acceptable cultural values that do not jeopardize the integrity of their employees' performance in the institution.*

**Keyword:** Employee cultural diversity, language diversity, organizational performance, religion diversity, value diversity

### INTRODUCTION

Increasing globalization requires more interaction among people from diverse cultures and backgrounds than ever before. People no longer live and work in insular organizations; they are now part of a worldwide economy with competition coming from nearly every continent. For this reason, organizations need diversity to become more creative and open to change. Therefore, maximizing and capitalizing on workplace diversity has become an important issue for management today. Likewise, organizations and their employees do not exist in a vacuum, separated from their cultural surroundings, but in a specific cultural or sociocultural environment.

To remain relevant in the competitive environment, it is necessary for firms to hire employees that represent their demographics. This could include people who represent a particular ethnic community and who understand and know the needs of their culture. It could also mean having a representative from a particular religion who may be able to give insight into acceptable and non-offensive traditions that could be used by the organization, for example during a marketing campaign.

Over the past decade, including cultural diversity in institutions has become crucial. Gender equality, language equality, religion equality, race equality, and job equality have all been major components of human rights activities and have been recognized in various human rights conventions. The government, among other institutions, has promoted diversity in various ways, including by enacting legislation and making policies that promote equality.

Globally, organizations are adopting cultural diversity as a way of enhancing performance. Globalization has enabled diversity to thrive in most nations. Workforce diversity in African countries has been emphasized over time, based on long fight against racism and discrimination. The number of cultural differences has decreased over time, allowing African organizations to embrace diversity at the end of the twenty-first century. Globalization enabled African countries to become racially and ethnically heterogeneous (Patten, 2016).

In Africa, the case for diversity is primarily cultural, social, or racial. South Africa is an example where the workforce was divided across racial lines for a long time. A democratic and non-racist constitution was enacted in 1996 (Horwitz, 2002) which allows South African society and organizations to practice equal rights for white and black people. Through legislation that was implemented during affirmative action, almost all organizations adopted a diversity management design. Black managers in South Africa increased in number as a result of equal rights and affirmative action.

Employees that regularly attend religious services are less stressed and have a greater sense of control, which is associated with lower distress and thus are more productive at work (Weaver & Agle, 2012). Also, employees with strong religious commitment have increased self-esteem and social support, as well as enhanced coping skills that positively contribute to their work performance. Religious practice provides these benefits through employees that become more steadfast and have a support network among family and friends that helps them maintain a pattern of regimented care.

Cultural disharmony in Nigeria exists in the form of tribalism and nepotism and has given rise to constant struggle for “the national cake.” It is more of an issue of religious incompatibility with social consequences. Indeed, religion and ethnicity more than gender inequality separate people in Nigeria. The 2010 census of the Association of Religion Data Archives reported that 46.5 per cent of Nigeria's total population is Christian, while the Muslim population is 45.5 per cent. 7.7 percent are members of other religious groups.

The lack of cultural integration hinges on determination of faithfuls to protect, preserve, and propagate their belief system at all costs and beyond existing boundaries. This constitutes the bane of our national development. The nation’s constitution, which should be an instrument of agreement and integration through its provisions, has failed to create the anticipated ambiance of congeniality. This has gradually entered educational institutions, hence, portend negative consequences on performance of institutions and organizations (Konrad, 2018).

Nwinami (2014) states that workplace diversity will be an issue so long as individuals with differences work in the same environment. Though individual differences can promote creativity and increase satisfaction at work, they can also be the root of conflict and frustration between groups (Mullins, 2010). Hence, some organizations' leaders have failed to understand how the workforce interacts with one another as individuals and as groups, and how this behaviour affect both employee and organizational performance (Ugwuzor, 2011).

Performance is affected when managers fail to understand diversity and are not skilled enough to manage issues of cultural diversity (Assefa, 2014). Ang (2017) states that diversity can have both positive and negative impact on organizations, but the nature of the impact depends on the type of diversity climate that exists rather than the fact of diversity itself. Differences in culture make general management and technical knowledge difficult to exploit.

For this reason, some managers of organizations lack the knowledge on how to effectively manage cultural diversity, create an inclusive environment, and what strategies to employ to assist them in dealing with issues of cultural diversity in the organization. It is also observed that, in tertiary institutions, management and staff fail to pay attention to the impact of cultural diversity and its effect on organizational performance. And as such, little is known about the nature and uniqueness of cultural diversity.

As a result, there is a problem with several lines of research focusing on the effect of culture on organizational performance in the Western context. And as such, little is known about the nature and uniqueness of the Nigerian culture and its impact on organizational performance. While much attention has been devoted to impact of cultural diversity in workforce, less attention has been given to issues associated with multicultural diversity in the educational sector. Only a few studies have been carried out on effect of employee cultural diversity on educational institutions' performance in Nigeria.

This study therefore, seeks to fill the knowledge gap by investigating how employee cultural diversity affects performance of educational institutions, with particular focus on more employees' cultural (language, value, and religion) diversity.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts the strategic choice theory because it supports the principles and tenets of integrating workforce diversity at all levels of an organization for optimum results. Strategic-choice theorists argue that top executives make decisions that influence organizational outcomes and performance. Roberson and Park (2017) stated that low to moderate levels of leader racial diversity may weaken strategic decision-making through decreased communication and increased conflict among organizational leaders, thus negatively influencing firm performance. Effective strategic choice necessitates the exercise of power and the ability of organizational actors to act on their own free will.

### **Concept of Employee Cultural Diversity**

Cultural diversity is the existence of different individuals from different cultures or societies whose differences arise from language, religion, race, sexual orientation, gender, age, and ethnicity (Grobber, 2013). Diversity is a subjective phenomenon created by group members themselves, who, on the basis of their different social identities, categorize each other as similar or dissimilar (Maier, 2012). There is a definite trend towards the definition of multiplicity of diversity dimensions.

Arredondo (2017) adds culture, social class, and language to the primary dimensions and health care beliefs and recreational interest to the secondary dimensions. She further adds a tertiary dimension, which encompasses historical moments experienced. In order to understand the concept of cultural diversity, we start by defining what culture is. According to Varner and Beamer (2011), culture explains how people make sense of their world.

This definition is in line with the position of Hofstede (2017) that one of the critical impacts of migration and globalization is the dramatic increase in the opportunity and need to interact with people who are diverse in culture. The thinking has changed on cultural diversity from being a “melting pot” to “multiculturalism,” accepting it as an essential part of a society

(Parvis, 2003). Employee cultural diversity can be discerned from multiple dimensions. Herein, we look at language, value and religious diversity.

### **Employee Language Diversity**

Language is the key to a person's self-identity. Language allows us to relate to and understand each one another (Imberti, 2017). Language is defined as a system of conceptual symbols that allows individuals to communicate (Imberti, 2017). It is an artifact of how thoughts are formulated as well as how they are communicated and discussed (Bartel, 2001). Language affects almost every aspect of life. It not only aids communication, but is also a link to individuals' identity (Lauring, 2008). It enable people express emotions, share feelings, tell stories, and convey complex messages and knowledge (Imberti, 2017; Lauring, 2008).

The interplay between corporate language and natural or cultural languages is a critical challenge to business practice (Welch et al., 2005). The language used by decision makers in a company both shapes and binds what the company focuses on and how it articulates its strategic options (Brannen & Doz, 2012). In this regard, language can facilitate and significantly limit the strategic growth and performance of companies. Language barriers can be key factors that prevent information about target market from reaching organizational decision-makers (Brannen & Doz, 2012).

### **Employee Value Diversity**

Value is a system of beliefs and assumptions that are shared among people (Hofstede, 2005); and which influences their behaviours and interactions (Rosenblatt, 2011). Awujo et al. (2015) describe values as beliefs that are meaningful to a given people; they are worthwhile and desirable principles followed, and revered by a people across generations. Values can range from commonplace beliefs in hard work and punctuality, to more psychological principle, such as self-reliance, concern for others, and harmony of purpose. Employee value diversity is thus acceptable standard that governs individuals' behaviour within an organization.

A lack of it may result in employees' behaviour being influenced by their personal values, resulting in unacceptable behaviour in the organization. Such personal value that are not in alignment with the organization lead to making wrong decisions for the organization, which will impact the culture more than any amount of communication and thus negatively affect performance (Pettigrew, 2018).

Awujo et al. (2015) describe values as beliefs that are meaningful to a given people; which are based on desirable principles, and which revered across generations. Values are expressed in relationship with others through loyalty, reliability, honesty, generosity, trustworthiness, as well as responsibility to family, friends, co-workers, organization, community or country. Tolerance, openness, respect for others and teamwork are great human values, while Oneness, love, beauty, and truth are higher spiritual values that they derive from (Awujo et al., 2014).

### **Employee Religious Diversity**

Religion involves a high level of belief, frequent involvement in religious institutions such as churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples, and participation in religious practices such as scripture reading, worship, and prayer (McCullough & Willoughby, 2019). Religion comprises both religious belief and religious behaviour. Religious belief, which is also

referred to as internal religiosity or faith, is defined as belief in God and a trusting acceptance of God's will (Steiner, 2010).

Religious behaviour, or external religiosity, on the other hand, includes all observable activities that are undertaken in a religious context, in particular going to church (Steiner, 2010). Religion has been identified as one of the critical elements that influence an individual's value system and, hence, shape the cultural environment of an organization (Kutcher, 2010). As mentioned by Abdel-Khalek (2010), religion affects the way in which people behave through an individual's value system.

### **Concept of Organisational Performance**

Waiganjo et al. (2012) note that organizational performance may be measured in terms of multiple objectives of profitability, employee satisfaction, productivity, and growth, among others. Advocates of the balanced scorecard performance management system proposed a broader performance measurement approach that recognizes both financial and non-financial measures, including sales, profitability, return on investments, market share, customer base, product quality, innovation, and company attractiveness. In recent years, organizations have attempted to manage organizational performance using the balanced scorecard, where performance is tracked and measured in multiple dimensions such as financial performance, customer service, social responsibility, and employee stewardship.

Khan and Khan (2011) assert that organizational performance depends on various factors, including contributions of human resource capital. This is because human resources in an organization play important roles in growth and organizational performance. Abu-Jarad et al. (2010) noted that although many studies have found that different organizations tend to emphasize different objectives, the literature suggests that financial profitability and growth are the most common measures of organizational performance. Richard et al. (2019) explain that organizational performance comprises actual output an organization measured against intended outputs (goals and objectives).

### **Employee Language Diversity and Organisational Performance**

Language barriers can arise between individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. These barriers then influence various aspects of the service experience and become a critical issue during intercultural service encounters (Imberti, 2017). When one is unable to identify with other cultural groups, they may have negative attitudes towards such groups (Bartel, 2001). Being ignorant of such differences can prevent customers who cannot speak the language being used by an employee from interacting with them (Baker & Haretl, 2017). Mambert (2001) observes that a big problem faced by many employees today, is language issue.

Mambert (2001) illustrates language barrier through the example that, in some cultures, saying "no" is considered discourteous. Instead, they give the signal "yes," and in this specific situation, they generally mean "I hear you; I understand what you are saying." A native of American culture would perceive this as a strong response of understanding. To avoid an embarrassing situation, most foreign employees say yes even if they do not completely understand what the other person is saying.

Communication between people who speak different languages can be difficult (Worman, 2006). Katz and Pesetsky (2011) state that employees who are not fluent in the primary language used in the workplace may have difficulty expressing their needs or responding to requests from colleagues and customers. This can lead to providing incorrect or misleading

information. A customer who is unable to clearly understand the worker due to heavy accent or lack of command of the language may become frustrated and take their business elsewhere (Levinson, 2012).

Canestrino et al. (2022) examine the impact of language diversity on knowledge sharing within international university research teams. The study was propelled by growth in international collaborations and the increasing number of diverse teams that affect knowledge sharing. Individuals engage in daily knowledge activities in a language they are not native speakers of. Understanding the challenges they face and how they manage emerging difficulties was the main aim of the study. Both interviews and direct observations were employed to better understand the phenomenon, deliberately triangulate data, and improve validity. Results show that non-native language use determines the emergence of different language proficiency levels, depending on the nature of the knowledge domain. Within non-job-related knowledge domains, the lack of linguistic abilities, summed up by perceived cultural diversities, mainly affects people's propensity to engage in personal and more intense social relationships. In view of the above, we hypothesize that:

Ho<sub>1</sub>: Employee language diversity do not have significant effect on performance of Adamawa State University.

### **Employee Value Diversity and Organisational Performance**

Individuals are part of societies, and culture manifests itself through individuals (Brette & Weast, 2012). Knippenberg (2000) states that human beings have different goals and expectations about their work, depending on the culture they live in. Every person has a moral compass, defined by values that guides how they treat others and conduct themselves (Merrit 2000). Soares (2017) adds that people who lack strong ethical values may enact negative behaviour that can hurt the organization. While a company cannot do anything about the influences that shape a person's values and behaviour before hiring, the organization can try to influence employees' behaviour in the workplace (Li et al., 2001).

Knippenberg (2000) states that a system of punishments and rewards can foster the type of values a company wants to see in its employees, essentially filtering behaviour through conditioning. If people see that certain behaviours are rewarded, then they may decide to alter their behaviour, which will in turn alter their values. In addition, Soares et al. (2017) add that a gap sometimes exists between a peoples' values and behaviour. This gap can stem from a conscious decision not to follow a specific value with a corresponding action. This decision can be influenced by how deeply this value affects the person's character and by the surrounding environment.

Rashim and Suman (2022) investigate the impact of workforce diversity on employee performance in the workplace; and reported that workforce diversity is a strength for any organization and, if managed properly, will increase the productivity of the employees and their performance. Similarly, Padam (2022) conducted a study on workforce diversity and its impact on employees' performance in commercial banks in Nepal. The study found that workforce diversity positively relates to employee performance. In view of the above, we hypothesize that:

Ho<sub>2</sub>: Employee value diversity do not have significant effect on performance of Adamawa State University.

## **Employee Religious Diversity and Organisational Performance**

There is a wealth of information that suggests a positive relationship between religiosity and subjective well-being (Abdel-Khalek, 2010). The positive consequences that studies show accompany religious belief and practices have made Americans increasingly want their religions integrated into all areas of their lives (Kutcher, 2010). The many benefits religious beliefs have on physical and mental health and ethical decision-making have pushed some organizations to support and encourage expressions of religion and faith at the workplace, Kutcher (2010).

Employees who are allowed to express their faith, religion, or spirituality experience improved quality of work life, certainly for themselves if not for others (Miller 2017). Elm (2003) states that there is growing evidence that the line between workplace and religious beliefs is growing thinner by the day. People differ in their religious motivations. Some people hold religious beliefs and engage in religious practices because they find their primary motivation in religion; their religious belief is driven by intrinsic factors.

Others, however, see religious belief as a means to an end, such as satisfying a social need or a sense of security or status (Allport & Ross, 1967). Weaver and Agle (2012) found that individuals with an intrinsic religious orientation are high in determination and self-esteem, which encourages and anticipates actual entrepreneurial activity. On the other hand, individuals with extrinsic religious orientations appear to discourage entrepreneurship.

Yuliya et al. (2022) conducted a study on cultural diversity in top management teams. Despite its growing social relevance, research on cultural diversity in top management teams has been sparse and fragmented. To build a firm foundation and facilitate the development of this field, the study reviewed and synthesized 106 articles published between 1997 and 2021. the study provide a comprehensive field map explicating antecedents and influence of top management team cultural diversity, showing that cultural diversity constitutes a distinct and important aspect of top management team diversity that has significant implications for a variety of outcomes. In view of the above, we hypothesize that:

H<sub>03</sub>: Employee religious diversity do not have significant effect on performance of Adamawa State University.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study focused on examining the effect of employee cultural diversity and organizational productivity. The study adopted a survey research design, hence collected data cross-sectional survey. The total population of the study is 824, comprising 232 and 592 non-academic staff of different cadres. The sample size for this study was 269, determined using the Taro Yemani Formula. Convenience sampling was used to arrive at the test units. Convenience sampling is a type of sampling where, without additional requirements, the first available primary data source is used for the research. The study used questionnaire as tool for collecting data. Quantitative data collected were coded into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 for Windows, cross-checked for entry errors, and analyzed, whereas descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were employed to present the data in table form. At 0.05 level of significance, regression analysis was used to test the relationship between the dimensions of employee cultural diversity (independent variable) and organizational performance (dependent variable).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1: Model Summary of effect of cultural diversity on organizational performance**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.813 <sup>a</sup>	.711	.712	1.58174

a. Predictors: (Constant), Language Diversity, Value, Diversity, Religious Diversity

b. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

Source: Output of data analyses on employee cultural diversity and organizational performance (2023.)

**Table 2: Analysis of variance of employee cultural diversity and organizational performance**

### ANOVA<sup>b</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	622.951	4	776.225	423.667	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	221.121	255	4.328		
	Total	764.814	256			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Language Diversity, Value, Diversity, Religious Diversity

b. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

Source: Output of data analyses on employee cultural diversity and organizational performance (2023.)

The result on the ANOVA in Table 2 shows that the model had an F-statistics of 311.777 and a p-value = 0.000. This meant that the four variables were both significant ( $P < 0.05$ ).

**Table 3: Coefficients of model effect of cultural diversity on organizational performance**

### Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Collinearity Statistics		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	9.214	.821		19.211	.000		
	LD	.813	.036	.819	14.277	.000	1.000	1.000
	VD	.765	.013	.954	83.212	.000	1.000	1.000
	RD	.663	.007	.822	87.261	.000	1.000	1.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Language Diversity, Value, Diversity, Religious Diversity

b. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

Source: Output of data analyses on employee cultural diversity and organizational performance (2023.)

Table 3 shows that the regression coefficient between employee language diversity and organizational performance is (= 0.819,  $t = 14.277$ ,  $p 0.05$ ). These statistics suggests that language diversity has statistically significant effect of organizational performance. Also, Table 3 shows that employee value diversity and organizational performance has regression coefficients of (= 0.954,  $t = 83.212$ ,  $p 0.05$ ). This imply that employee value diversity has very strong and statistically significant effect on organizational performance. Furthermore, the coefficients of religious diversity's effect on organizational performance is significant (= 0.822,  $t = 87.261$ ,  $p 0.05$ ).



The results of the analyses means that employee cultural diversity in terms of language diversity, value diversity, and religion diversity has significant effect on organizational performance at Adamawa State University Mubi. These finding align with extant literature which suggests that language, as a prime component of culture is built over time around domain-specific usages of words, acronyms, and stories that reflect industry context and national language environment (Brannen & Doz, 2012). While such specialized language is usually clear to insiders, it is not to outsiders who lack the shared experience of insiders (Janson, 2016). Moreover, speakers attach invisible meanings to information exchanged in language as they draw on the language systems and interpretive frames of their respective mother tongues (Kassis, 2005; Hofstede, 2012).

The findings also support the view that when values are the basis by which one make decisions, such decisions often align with the future they wants to experience (Janson, 2016). This is because values transcend contexts and experiences; and can be used to make tough decisions in complex situations that yet to be experienced (Awujo et al., 2014). Hence, values provides flexible mode of decision-making than beliefs (Warner-Sderholm, 2012). Hofstede (2012) explains that cultural values influence individuals' thinking and behaviour, which then impacts their performance.

Furthermore, the current findings corroborate results of earlier studies which showed that that cultural diversity have strong impact organizations, especially in today's organizations with employees from diverse backgrounds and religio-cultural orientations (Warner-Sderholm, 2012). Particularly, Janson (2016) showed that corporate processes such as mergers and acquisitions benefit from organizational cultural set ups, and confer transaction profit.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Use of corporate language (English) hinders proper transfer of knowledge among employees. Employees that are able to communicate fluently and interact seamlessly, enhance innovation and productivity of organizations. Employees' mother tongue influence their interpersonal skills, and affects their work performance negatively. However, organizational values must be in line with employees' cultural values; and must discourage negative employees' values. In addition, employees' religious beliefs influence the way they work, just as their religious practices and beliefs enable them to work well with others.

This study examined the effect of employee cultural diversity on the performance of Adamawa State University Mubi. The results of the empirical analyses showed that employee cultural diversity have significant effect on organizational performance at Adamawa State University Mubi. Specifically, the study showed that all the dimensions of employee cultural diversity (language diversity, value diversity and religious diversity) have positive and statistically significant effect on organizational performance at Adamawa State University Mubi. The study therefore concludes that employee cultural diversity informs organization performance and that organizational performance at Adamawa State University Mubi depends of the cultural diversity of its employees.

In view of the results of the empirical analyses and the conclusion reached, the study recommends that management of Adamawa State University Mubi should emphasize positive cultural values because many employees see the value of the institution as very positive and in line with their own cultural values. Management should maintain standard and generally acceptable cultural values that do not jeopardize the integrity of employees' performance in

the institution. There should be emphasis on teamwork, which discourages negative cultural values. The study also recommends that the institution should continue to give employees time to practice their religion because religion encourages hard work and guides their everyday lives. Management should always discourage religious sentiments among employees that prefer working with people of the same religion. Despite the fact that religious beliefs do not influence the way they work, management should always see religion as a great motivator for employees to be more committed to their work.

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