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Volume XVI, Issue 2(20)

Journal of Research in Educational Sciences

The Journal is designed to promote scholars' thought in the field of education with the clear mission to provide an interdisciplinary forum for discussion and debate about education's most vital issues. We intend to publish papers that contribute to the expanding boundaries of knowledge in education and focus on research, theory, current issues and applied practice in this area.

The Editor in Chief would like to invite submissions for the **Volume XVI, Issue 2(20), Winter 2025** of the **Journal of Research in Educational Sciences** (JRES).

The primary aim of the Journal has been and remains the provision of a forum for the dissemination of a variety of international issues, empirical research and other matters of interest to researchers and practitioners in a diversity of subject areas linked to the broad theme of educational sciences.

The aims and scope of the Journal includes, but is not limited to; the following major topics as they relate to the Educational Sciences:

- Educational Psychology;
- Engagement and Community;
- Leadership in Education;
- School Improvement;
- Human Resources in Education;
- Education and Information Science;
- Global strategies in Higher Education;
- Learner's Needs in the 21st Century;
- The Role of Education in The Globalization World;
- Technology-Based Learning.

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Workplace Diversity Education as a Catalyst for Employee Engagement and Performance

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Abstract: This study is intended to explore workplace diversity education as a driver of employee engagement and performance in selected universities in Ondo State, Nigeria. During times of fast-growing higher education that need to change with regard to globalization and demographic shifts, diversity education can be used as a strategic lever to create an enabling work environment that fosters employees' commitment and productivity. This research had a descriptive survey design targeting academic staff across many universities. In order to attain these data, this study has adopted a structured questionnaire from stratified random samples. Quantitative data were analyzed to get the descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression analysis; whereas thematic analysis was done in case of qualitative data. The findings indicated a positive and significant relationship between workplace diversity education and employee engagement, such that the more inclusive the training programs, the higher the job involvement, affective commitment, and discretionary effort. Diversity education also improved employee performance by enhancing teaching effectiveness, research output, and professional collaboration.

Keywords: workplace diversity education; employee engagement; academic staff performance; universities; inclusion.

JEL Classification: I20; A12; M14.

Introduction

The need for workplace diversity has been brought to the centre of concern, especially in this dynamic and globalized work environment, where organizations are striving for inclusivity to improve employee outcomes (Makudza, Muchongwe and Dangaiso 2020). Workplace diversity education, which involves structured training programs aimed at enhancing awareness, understanding, and valuing of the diverse workforce, has emerged as a critical strategy for enhancing engagement and performance at work. It equips the employees with the knowledge and ability to conduct themselves appropriately in various work environments; hence, making the workplace more inclusive and collaborative, where productivity and innovation are stimulated.

Employee engagement directly relates to workplace diversity education, as it refers to the extent of enthusiasm and commitment a worker has in executing their job. When employees perceive that a given organization embraces diversity and works toward creating an atmosphere of inclusion, they are more likely to act with a sense of belonging, motivation, and job satisfaction (Tortia *et al.* 2022). Diversity education programs help reduce unconscious bias, foster mutual respect, and improve interpersonal relationships among employees factors contributing to higher engagement levels. Such work teams tend to be more productive, usually with lower turnover intentions and have a higher willingness to give their best efforts toward organizational success.

Diversity education can directly impact employee performance in the workplace by strengthening its adaptability, teamwork, and problem-solving capabilities (Maiwada and Oshionebo 2024). Workforce diversity suggests different perspectives, experiences, and skills that, if well managed through education and training, could be translated into better decision-making and innovation. Workers who receive diversity education can interact and work across cultural, generational, and demographic divides more effectively to achieve better performance for themselves and the organization (Köllen 2019). Further, diversity education builds a working environment where all employees feel appreciated and respected; hence, reducing workplace conflicts and increasing performance efficiency.

This study contributes to the discourse of workplace diversity education, highlighting that it acts as a catalyst that enhances employee performance and engagement. While much scholarship has been engaged in understanding the management of workplace diversity and the dynamics it unleashes, hardly any have directed attention to its educational dimension-how structured diversity training programs shape perception, behaviours and commitment towards organizational goals among employees. The findings of this research shed new light on how knowledge acquisition and awareness create an enabling work environment for higher engagement and better performance with a focus on workplace diversity education. The timeliness of this research is further emphasized by the fact that organizations in modern society are grappling increasingly with a diverse workforce, hence businesses and institutions have a pressing reason to be more proactive in adopting educational strategies that will guarantee inclusivity and maximise human capital potential.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Context of Workplace Diversity Education

Workplace diversity education can be defined as formalized learning processes for improving the awareness, understanding, and skills of employees to deal with and embrace workplace diversity. In diversity education, according to (Zhuwao *et al.* 2019a) programs are designed to build inclusive behaviours, eliminate unconscious biases, and help employees learn the necessary skills for interacting effectively in diverse environments. Such training involves cultural competency, anti-discrimination policies, and inclusive leadership, which makes the workplace cohesive and collaborative. With organizations increasingly appreciating diversity in driving innovation, creativity, and competitive advantage, the relevance of workplace diversity education is growing more than ever (Luu 2018).

Diversity education can be defined in the workplace as programmed activities improving knowledge, sensitivity, and skills related to workplace diversity and inclusiveness (Köllen 2019). The training sessions and workshops, along with policy mechanisms and informal learning, constitute some of the necessary elements that foster an enabling work culture. According to Roberson (2019), workplace diversity education should act as a strategic method or tool for reducing bias in increasing cultural competence and treating all employees justly from different backgrounds. The nature of the working population has evolved and grown more demographically diverse, demanding continuous learning to optimize diverse human capital.

1.2 History of Workplace Diversity Education: Evolution and Policy Frameworks

The concept of workplace diversity education has evolved through changes in demographics, legislation, and organizational commitments to corporate social responsibility. In the United States, diversity education came to prominence in the mid-20th century following civil rights movements and anti-discrimination laws such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The world over, similar legislative frameworks exist, like the Equality Act 2010 in the United Kingdom and Nigeria's Federal Character Principle, which seeks to ensure fair representation of different ethnic groups in public sector employment (Edewor, 2021). These legal instruments provide a framework for diversity education in that organizations have to adopt policies for equal opportunity and inclusion.

Diversity education has expanded beyond compliance-driven approaches to proactive strategies that align with business objectives. Many multinational corporations now integrate diversity education into leadership development, talent management, and corporate training programs to enhance workforce engagement and innovation (Sabharwal 2014). This shift underscores the recognition that diversity education is not merely a regulatory obligation but a strategic imperative for sustainable business success.

1.3 Workplace Diversity Education and Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is a very important facilitator of organizational performance, and diversity education has emerged as an influential means of nurturing a corporate culture that contributes to enhancing employee engagement. In this respect, the research of Nishii (2013) showed that employees who felt that their companies

were indeed serious about their stance on diversity and inclusion expressed a higher level of engagement and satisfaction with their jobs. Diversity education may, therefore, have a paramount effect on enhancing this process, encouraging psychological safety, reducing work discrimination, and facilitating open discourses among various sets of different employee backgrounds. Further, diversity education by the organization makes individuals feel valued and respected, reinforcing an emotional bond between employees and their organizations as stated by (Shore, Cleveland, and Sanchez 2018). This perceived better fit may heighten their motivation to give rise to extra-role engagement or discretionary effort at work.

1.4 Workplace Diversity Education and Employee Performance

The correlation of workplace diversity education with employees' performance is one of the major issues in human resource management literature (Olu-Ogunleye *et al.* 2023). Diversity education enhances interpersonal, cultural awareness, and adaptability skills that make employees better performers. Arts *et al.* (2023) present the case that providing employees with competencies to perform in diverse environments can make employees more collaborative and innovative, leading to better performance. Besides, Ely and Thomas in 2020 argued that such education reduces friction and misunderstandings between people based on their diversity, thus offering a friendly work environment and therefore increasing the output of the workers in the organization. Workers who obtain training on embracing diversity can develop their growth mindset with problem-solving capacities and hence also work effectively among diverse teams as a way to enhance job performance (Sathyanarayana, Harsha, and Sandhya 2024).

2. Empirical Review

Empirical studies strongly support the fact that workplace diversity education has a positive influence on employee engagement and performance. Organizations with structured diversity education programs reported higher employee engagement scores and lower turnover rates (Uhuru, Ehule, and Ned 2025). Similarly, Souza, (2024) showed that teams with diversity training interventions exhibited improved problem-solving capabilities and increased productivity. On the other hand, diversity education has been shown, in a meta-analysis by Adeleye *et al.* (2019); Okilo *et al.* (2023) to positively affect attitudes, behaviours, and knowledge retention of employees; all of these further contribute toward better workplace performance. These establish, in due measure, the pragmatic relevance of diversity education as a strategic means toward an inclusive and high-performance workforce.

3. Theoretical Framework

Several theoretical frameworks support the linkage between workplace diversity education, employee engagement, and performance. According to the Social Learning Theory by Bandura, (1986), people learn behaviours, attitudes, and competencies through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. Workplace diversity education operates within this framework by providing employees with models of inclusive behaviour and reinforcing positive interactions through training and development programs.

Social Identity Theory (SIT) explains how an individual's self-concept and self-esteem are shaped by their affiliation with social groups (Kiran 2023). According to this theory, people categorize themselves into various groups based on attributes such as gender, ethnicity, occupation, or organizational affiliation. These group memberships significantly contribute to an individual's sense of identity, influencing their attitudes, behaviours, and interactions with others. Organizational settings show that workers often identify themselves with either certain teams, departments, or the entire organization itself (Mothe and Nguyen-Thi 2021). Such identifications build their allegiance and solidarity in their groups; this occasionally leads to what is termed an in-group favouritism phenomenon whereby people show partiality toward members of their group in comparison with other groups. Employees may feel a stronger bond and allegiance to their immediate team compared to colleagues in other departments.

SIT further posits that group affiliations play a crucial role in shaping how individuals perceive themselves and others, thereby influencing attitudes, behaviours, and workplace performance (Bharadwaj 2023). The theory also provides insight into intergroup dynamics, including the development of stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. Strong identification with a particular group often leads individuals to internalize the group's norms and values, which can sometimes result in stereotypical perceptions of others. Employees from one department may develop stereotypes about colleagues in another department, attributing differences in work style or personality to group characteristics (Owusu, Gregar, and Ntsiful 2021).

4. Materials and Methods

The targeted population comprised academic staff derived from the selected universities in Ondo State. A multistage sampling technique was adopted to derive a representative sample across various disciplines and faculties. First, a purposive sampling technique was used in the selection of universities based on such factors as institutional diversity policies and their commitment to workplace diversity education. In the stratification, random sampling included a selection based on participants' academic ranks, namely professors, senior lecturers, lecturers, and assistant lecturers, who would be represented in proportion. The sample size was calculated using Cochran's formula for determining sample size among large populations, and a total of 336 respondents were surveyed.

It was a structured questionnaire supported by semi-structured interviews to ensure in-depth insights into the issues. The sections of the questionnaire are bio-data, workplace diversity education initiatives, employee engagement level, and perceived performance outcomes. The research instrument used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to measure the perceptions of the respondents. A pilot study was done on the questionnaire for validity and reliability among 30 academic staff in a university that did not form part of the main study.

Data collection lasted for a period of six weeks. The questionnaires were administered using both physical copies and electronic versions through Google Forms to ensure high returns. Ethical approval was obtained from the University Research Ethics Committee before the conduct of this study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection, with assurance of confidentiality and voluntary participation. Anonymity was maintained throughout the study, and participants had the right to withdraw at any stage without consequences.

The data analysis was done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, SPSS, version 26 Descriptive statistics were performed in summarizing data on mean, standard deviation, and frequency distributions. Regarding workplace diversity education with employee engagement and performance, Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analyses were performed as inferential statistical tests.

5. Research Methodology

For this study, quantitative methods were used to collect data from employees of selected universities in Ondo state. The quantitative data collected from the surveys will then be analysed using statistical techniques such as correlation analysis and regression analysis (Kumasey 2014).

The Taro Yamane Formula was used in the sample size determination.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

where n represents the sample size, N is the total population, e is the error term depending on the confidence level, and P = 0.05 is assumed for the equation.

If n = Sample Size

N = 2,102

e = 5% or 0.05

CL = 95%

Therefore, n = 336 employees

6. Research Results

Table 1.1. Pearson Correlations on the relationship between workplace diversity and employee performance

		Diversity of backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences	Promotion diversity inclusion	of and	Employee performance
Diversity of backgrounds, perspectives and experiences	Pearson Correlation	1	.676**		.629**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000		.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	196.278	125.909		115.069
	N	331	331		331
Promotion of diversity and inclusion	Pearson Correlation	.676**	1		.808**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	125.909	176.943		140.477

	Diversity of backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences	Promotion diversity inclusion	of and	Employee performance
	N	331	331	331
Employee performance	Pearson Correlation	.629**	.808**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	115.069	140.477	170.767
	N	331	331	331

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 and 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researcher's survey, 2025

Table 1.2. Regression Model Summary on the critical factors that contribute to enhancing workplace diversity education and employee performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
						F Change	df1	df2		
1	.852 ^a	.727	.723	.320	.727	172.842	5	325	.000	2.208

a. Predictors: (Constant), Employee resource groups or diversity councils; Clear performance expectations and goals; Training and education programs, Leadership commitment to diversity and inclusion; Recognition and rewards for good performance.

b. Dependent Variable: Workplace diversity and employee performance.

Source: Researcher's survey, 2025

6. Discussions

This study found that workplace diversity is clear to employees, workplace diversity is important for fostering creativity and innovation, ethnic and racial diversity is valued and promoted in my workplace and so on. The outcomes of this study are consistent with the research conducted by (Héliot *et al.* 2020), which defines workplace diversity as the variations in characteristics among the employees of a business. These variations can stem from factors such as linguistics, race, ethnicity, ancestry, culture, education, geographic area, religion, gender, marital status, age, physical ability, experience, and more. Workplace diversity refers to the inclusion of individuals with different characteristics such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as varying talents and limits (Sundari 2018). The study's understanding of diversity aligns with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979), which suggests that individuals develop a sense of belonging and derive positive self-esteem from identifying with social groups that share characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, religion, and educational background. Consequently, this has an impact on their attitudes, habits, and performance inside the organisation (Sahabuddin *et al.* 2023). However, (Orga and Ogbo, 2012) state that workforce diversity poses several issues for organisations, including interpersonal conflicts, personal prejudices, resistance to change, segment-based communication networks, conflicts between individual and group interests, group cohesiveness, and lobbying. (Chaarani, Skaf and Khalife, 2022) found that inadequate management of workplace diversity might lead to confusion and conflict among employees and management. According to (Shaban 2016), businesses that embrace diversity as a means of fostering innovation, growth, and development are more inclined to provide behavioural support and assist its implementation with increased emphasis, perseverance, and dedication.

Additionally, It was discovered that the work environment, training and development opportunities, leadership and management practices, employee motivation and engagement, performance evaluation and recognition of employees are all contributors to improved employee performance. A study conducted by (Jaiswal and Arun, 2021) yielded a similar outcome, revealing that training and development is an active process that induces a transformation in an individual's behaviour, attitude, knowledge, and skills, consequently enhancing employee performance. The studies conducted by (Hee *et al.* 2019) and (Rus and Băban, 2019) support the findings of this study, which indicate that employee performance refers to the actions and achievements of employees as they fulfil their assigned responsibilities following organisational policies, standards, and expectations. This performance is influenced by various factors, including training and development, employee motivation, effective communication, performance evaluation, rewards, and employee recognition (Zhuwao *et al.* 2019b). This finding aligns with the research conducted by (Idowu and Olu-Ogunleye, 2024) which demonstrated that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation play a substantial role in enhancing employee performance. (Smith and Bititci, 2017) conducted

a study in the UK banking business, which revealed that employee engagement had a substantial and beneficial influence on employee performance. Nevertheless, a comprehensive worldwide study indicates that unengaged individuals harm both the company and the nation (Hambler 2016). Managers have acknowledged the importance of employee performance in guaranteeing the survival and expansion of a business (Armstrong and Taylor 2020).

This study found that there is a significant relationship between workplace diversity and employee performance in the context of Nigerian Universities. The results of this study support the findings of (Rizwan *et al.* 2016) regarding the influence of workplace diversity on employee performance. The study found that diversity in terms of educational background, ethnicity, age, and gender has a significant and positive impact on employee performance. Other studies have supported the conclusions of this study and have discovered a favourable correlation between workforce diversity and employee performance (Faloye and Owoeye 2019; Karwal and Tandon 2021; Pal and Jain 2021). These studies have indicated that diversity enhances employee performance by fostering creativity, innovation, and more effective decision-making processes. When individuals with varied backgrounds collaborate, they contribute distinct perspectives, talents, and experiences, improving problem-solving capabilities and ultimately enhancing organisational success (Zhuwao *et al.* 2019b). In a study conducted by (Adil *et al.* 2019) in Jordan's hotel business, a favourable correlation was discovered between workforce diversity and job effectiveness. (Kundu and Mor, 2017) conducted a study in the Indian IT sector to assess the influence of a diversified workforce on the perceived performance of businesses. The study revealed that the perceived performance of businesses is enhanced by the notion of gender-based workforce diversity. However, (Joseph and Selvaraj, 2015) conducted a study where they measured workforce diversity using ethnicity, gender, and age. Their findings indicated that ethnicity, gender, and age had no significant impact on employees' performance. If workforce diversity is not effectively managed, it is apparent that it will lead to unfavourable consequences. However, (Inegbedion *et al.* 2020a) proposed contradictory findings, suggesting that groups with diverse members perform worse than groups with members that have commonalities.

Conclusions and Further Research

The findings of the study have clearly established that workplace diversity is central to creativity, innovation, and performance of employees in Nigerian Universities. Most respondents agreed to an understanding of workplace diversity and how such a concept was important for the realization of organizational objectives. They agreed upon these as well: that such initiatives promoting workplace diversity, like providing gender representation and valuing ethnic and racial inclusion, are well implemented in the organization. This shows that the university is committed to making the workplace an inclusive place where every employee is valued and respected regardless of their background.

Also, there was support from the work environment, as well as leadership and management best practices. Respondents strongly recommended constant feedback with a view to regular performance evaluations and recognition that this helps retain employees in universities who are highly motivated and fully committed to work.

The study also found a positive and significant relationship between workplace diversity and employee performance. It means that diversity and inclusion have a direct impact on organizational outcomes: it creates an atmosphere of cooperation, innovation, and engagement of employees. Critical drivers for such a relationship were employee resource groups, leadership commitment to diversity, and recognizing individual contributions. Overall, the study concludes that workplace diversity is not only a social responsibility but also a strategic advantage that positively impacts employee performance. The findings show that university diversity and inclusion initiatives are effective and contribute significantly to its organizational success. These results point to the need for further investment in diversity programs and leadership commitment to foster a dynamic, inclusive, and high-performing workforce.

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Itunu Olu-Ogunleye: formal writing, conceptualization, literature review, methodology and original draft.

Babatunde Akanji: supervision, editing and review.

Declaration of Competing Interest:

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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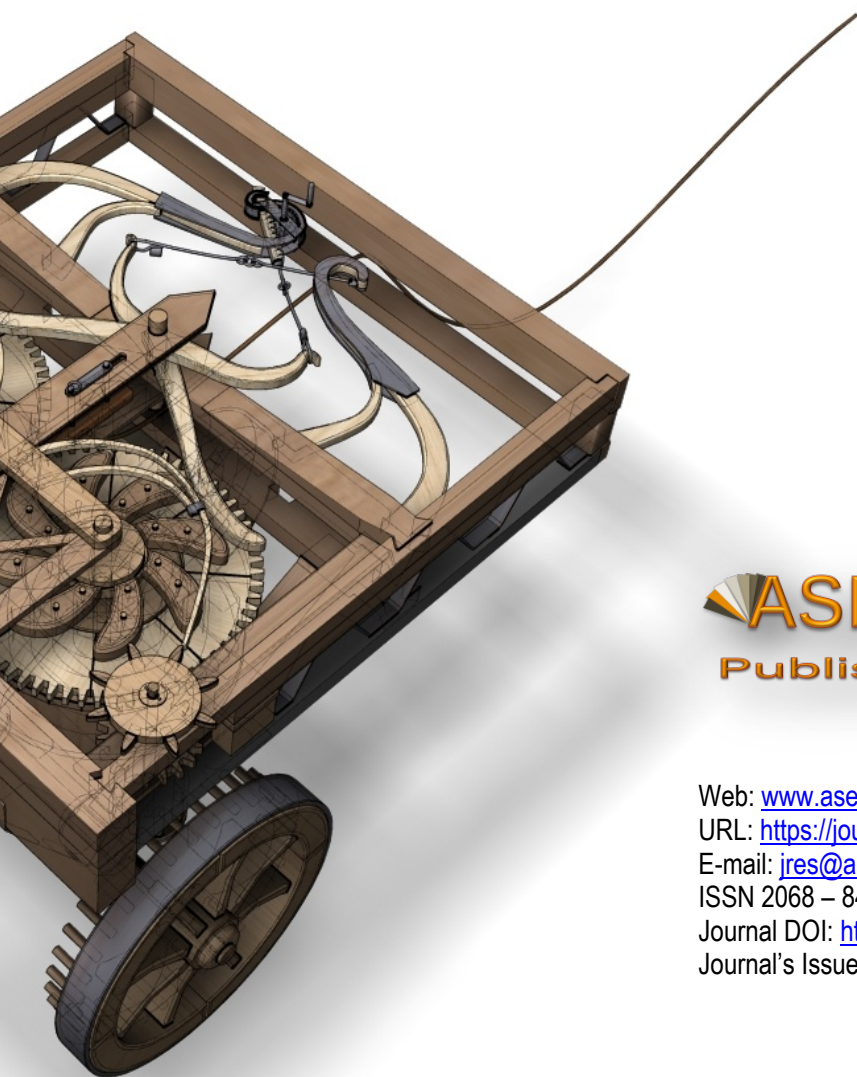
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