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| Research Article

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Workforce Diversity Management and Administrative Job Performance in State-Owned Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State

Josephine Onyeri Eke (PhD)
Department of Office and Information Management, Faculty of Administration and Management, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

Abstract: This study investigated the relationship between workforce diversity management and administrative job performance in state-owned tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The study specifically examined the influence of gender and age diversity management on administrative performance. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, and the population consisted of 1,245 administrative staff across universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education in the state. A stratified random sample of 295 respondents was selected to ensure proportional representation across institutions and departments. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, which was validated by experts and tested for reliability through a pilot study, yielding Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.78 to 0.85. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation coefficient) were employed to analyze the data at a 0.05 significance level. The findings revealed a positive and significant relationship between gender diversity management and administrative job performance ($r = 0.420$, $p = 0.001$), as well as a moderate positive and significant relationship between age diversity management and administrative performance ($r = 0.310$, $p = 0.012$). These results suggest that equitable gender practices, inclusive policies, and cross-generational collaboration enhance task execution, teamwork, knowledge transfer, and overall administrative effectiveness. The study concludes that workforce diversity is a critical human resource asset that, when strategically managed, can significantly improve administrative outcomes in state-owned tertiary institutions. Based on the findings, it is recommended that institutional management implement gender-inclusive policies, promote age diversity through mentoring programs, integrate diversity management into HR strategies, and provide continuous diversity training to staff.

Keywords: Workforce Diversity Management, Gender Diversity, Age Diversity, Administrative Job Performance, Tertiary Institutions, Rivers State.

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INTRODUCTION

The Workforce diversity management has become an essential part of modern human resource practices as organizations increasingly recognize the variety of individual differences among

employees. At its core, workforce diversity refers to the differences in demographic and personal attributes such as age, gender, education, ethnicity, and cultural background that exist among staff in an organization (Gautam, 2023). In tertiary institutions, especially those owned by the state, diversity can shape how administrative functions are carried out and how employees interact with students, faculty, and the wider community. Studies suggest that well-managed diversity can potentially improve organizational outcomes by leveraging the unique skills and perspectives of all employees (Awais et al., 2024).

The rationale for managing diversity in state-owned tertiary institutions extends beyond ethical considerations to include performance outcomes. Administrative job performance in higher education involves tasks such as program coordination, record keeping, student services, and policy implementation, which require collaborative efforts from staff with varying backgrounds. When diversity is effectively managed, employees are likely to experience higher levels of job satisfaction and cooperation, which positively influence performance (Gautam, 2023). Conversely, poorly handled diversity can lead to conflict, misunderstanding, and reduced morale, undermining institutional goals.

Workforce diversity management also interacts with organizational culture and leadership approaches. Leaders in tertiary institutions who promote inclusive practices and equitable opportunities can foster an environment where employees feel valued regardless of their differences (Usulor et al., 2023). This inclusive environment can spark creativity and adaptability as administrators bring diverse insights to problem-solving and decision-making processes. Research in educational settings has found that diversity dimensions such as age, gender, and ethnic background significantly affect employee performance when supported by inclusive policies (Gautam, 2023).

While the benefits of diversity management are often highlighted, the relationship between diversity and job performance is not always straightforward. Empirical research in different organizational contexts shows mixed results, with some diversity factors positively associated with performance and others presenting challenges if not properly aligned with institutional goals (Sanyang & Othman, 2019). These findings underline the importance of tailored diversity management strategies in tertiary institutions, where the complexity of administrative roles calls for thoughtful integration of diverse employee strengths.

In the context of Rivers State's state-owned tertiary institutions, the demographic mix of administrative staff reflects broader societal diversity. Understanding how this diversity influences job performance is crucial for policymakers and institutional leaders who aim to enhance efficiency and service quality. Studies conducted in Nigerian public institutions have pointed out that without genuine commitment to diversity management, organizations may experience negative effects on performance outcomes (Usulor et al., 2023). This insight highlights the need for deliberate policies that accommodate the varied needs and potentials of employees.

Given the strategic role administrative staff play in the daily functioning of tertiary institutions, research into workforce diversity management and administrative job performance offers both theoretical and practical value. By exploring how diversity dimensions are managed and how they relate to performance, institutions can develop evidence-based interventions to improve administrative effectiveness. Such research contributes to broader discussions on human resource management in educational settings, reinforcing that diversity, when managed well, can be a strength rather than a challenge.

Statement of the Problem

In state-owned tertiary institutions in Rivers State, administrative staff play a critical role in ensuring smooth operations, ranging from student services to record keeping and policy implementation. Despite their importance, there is evidence that administrative job performance is often inconsistent, which may affect overall institutional efficiency and service delivery. One

potential factor influencing this variability is the management of workforce diversity. Employees differ in age, gender, educational background, ethnicity, and professional experience, and without effective diversity management, these differences can lead to miscommunication, conflict, or underutilization of skills, ultimately undermining administrative effectiveness (Usulor, Afuecheta, & Igbokwe, 2023).

Furthermore, while diversity has the potential to enhance creativity, problem-solving, and adaptability, the lack of structured strategies to manage these differences in Rivers State's tertiary institutions may limit these benefits. Studies suggest that institutions that fail to implement inclusive policies and practices often experience reduced employee motivation, poor teamwork, and lower overall job performance (Gautam, 2023; Awais, Alam, & Alam, 2024). This gap underscores the need to investigate the relationship between workforce diversity management and administrative job performance, providing empirical evidence to guide institutional policies and interventions aimed at improving efficiency and effectiveness.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study aims to examine the relationship between workforce diversity management and administrative job performance in state-owned tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

1. To determine the effect of gender diversity management on administrative job performance.
2. To examine the impact of age diversity management on administrative job performance.

Research Questions

1. What is the effect of gender diversity management on administrative job performance in state-owned tertiary institutions?
2. How does age diversity management influence administrative job performance in these institutions?

Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between gender diversity management and administrative job performance in state-owned tertiary institutions.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between age diversity management and administrative job performance in state-owned tertiary institutions.

Literature Review

Workforce diversity management has been widely acknowledged as a critical component of effective human resource practices in organizations, including educational institutions. Diversity management refers to intentional policies and practices that recognize and value differences among employees to harness their full potential (Roberson, 2019). In the context of tertiary institutions, workforce diversity encompasses a range of characteristics such as gender, age, ethnicity, and educational background, which influence how administrative tasks are performed. Effective diversity management can lead to enhanced collaboration, reduced conflict, and greater innovation, all of which are important for the complex administrative environment of state-owned institutions.

Gender diversity, as a prominent dimension of workforce diversity, has been extensively studied for its impact on job performance. Research finds that when organizations adopt equitable gender policies, female and male employees are more likely to feel included and motivated, leading to

higher levels of performance (Ng & Sears, 2020). In tertiary institutions, administrative units often involve teamwork and coordination across departments, and gender-inclusive practices can improve communication and decision-making. However, the absence of gender diversity initiatives may contribute to bias, limited participation, and underutilization of talent, which undermines administrative efficiency.

Age diversity is another important factor influencing administrative job performance. The presence of both younger and older employees brings together a blend of fresh ideas and seasoned experience, which can enhance problem-solving and adaptability (Kunze, Boehm, & Bruch, 2011). Studies in higher education settings suggest that when age diversity is managed effectively, knowledge sharing increases, and organizational learning improves, contributing positively to performance outcomes. Conversely, lack of attention to generational differences can create misunderstandings or resistance to change, particularly in institutions with heterogenous age profiles.

Beyond individual diversity dimensions, the overall approach to workforce diversity management shapes employees' perceptions of fairness and inclusion. Inclusive organizational cultures that value diverse perspectives are more likely to experience lower turnover rates and higher job satisfaction, which correlate with improved job performance (Shore et al., 2018). In state-owned tertiary institutions where hierarchical structures and traditional norms may prevail, fostering an inclusive culture requires deliberate strategies that address structural and interpersonal barriers to diversity.

Empirical research in public sector institutions, including educational environments, underscores the positive link between diversity management and performance. For example, a study in Nigerian public institutions found that workforce diversity practices were positively associated with employee performance when supported by training, leadership commitment, and participatory decision-making (Usulor, Afuecheta, & Igbokwe, 2023). These findings highlight that diversity management is not merely a matter of representation but involves creating conditions that enable diverse employees to contribute effectively to organizational goals.

Despite the recognized benefits, challenges persist in implementing effective diversity management in state-owned tertiary institutions. Issues such as inadequate policy frameworks, limited resources for diversity training, and resistance to change can hinder the positive effects of diversity on administrative performance (Gautam, 2023). This underscores the need for continuous research and practical interventions that equip institutional leaders with evidence-based strategies to manage diversity in ways that enhance administrative effectiveness.

Theoretical Review

Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory

A relevant theory for the study the study is The Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory of the firm, proposed by Jay Barney in 1991. The RBV theory suggests that an organization's competitive advantage and performance are largely determined by the resources it possesses, especially those that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable. In the context of workforce diversity management, employees represent a key strategic resource, and their diverse skills, experiences, and perspectives can be leveraged to enhance administrative efficiency and overall institutional performance (Barney, 1991).

The theory assumes that resources which are heterogeneous across organizations and immobile can create sustained competitive advantage. Applied to workforce diversity, this implies that the unique demographic and professional attributes of administrative staff such as age, gender, education, and experience can be managed strategically to improve job performance. It also assumes that organizations must actively develop and align these resources with organizational goals to realize their full potential. In tertiary institutions, this means implementing effective

diversity management practices to utilize the skills and insights of diverse staff in administrative roles, which can enhance coordination, innovation, and service delivery.

The relevance of RBV to this study lies in its focus on internal resources as drivers of performance outcomes. Administrative staff, as human resources, constitute a critical element of an institution's operational capacity. By managing workforce diversity effectively, institutions can optimize the performance of these human resources, translating into better job execution, decision-making, and overall administrative efficiency. Therefore, RBV provides a theoretical framework for understanding how diversity management strategies can be transformed into improved administrative job performance in state-owned tertiary institutions.

Empirical Review

The first study by Gautam (2023) investigated the effect of workforce diversity management on employee performance in educational institutions, aiming to determine how various diversity dimensions influence performance among staff in higher education. Using an analytical survey design, the population consisted of administrative employees in private colleges in Kathmandu, from which a convenience sample of 392 respondents was drawn. Data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire that had been pretested for content validity, and results of the reliability analysis indicated acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha values reported above .70 for key constructs). Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data, showing that age diversity, gender diversity, tenure diversity, ethnic diversity, personality diversity, and attitude diversity each had a significant positive effect on employee performance, with attitude and gender diversity having the strongest influence (Gautam, 2023). The study concluded that managing workforce diversity in educational institutions can significantly enhance staff performance and recommended that tertiary education managers implement diversity-focused policies and practices to harness these benefits. This is directly relevant to the present study because it demonstrates in a tertiary education context how gender and age diversity management can be positively linked to administrative staff performance, supporting the need to explore this relationship empirically in state-owned tertiary institutions.

Another empirical investigation by Ismaila and Usman (2023) examined the impact of workforce diversity management on employees' performance at Niger State Polytechnic, Zungeru, Nigeria, with the objective of determining the influence of gender differences on task performance and age differences on contextual performance. The researchers employed a survey research design where the population consisted of 1,842 staff members, and a sample of 329 respondents was selected using the Taro Yamane formula. A five-point Likert-scale questionnaire was used, and although specific reliability coefficients were not reported in the abstract, the instrument was described as valid and appropriate for capturing perceptions of diversity and performance. Data were analysed using SPSS, including regression analysis, and the key findings showed that gender differences had a significant positive relationship with task performance, while age differences did not show a statistically significant effect on overall performance (Ismaila & Usman, 2023). The authors concluded that gender diversity management is crucial for improving performance outcomes and recommended that institutional managers actively support cross-gender collaboration and teamwork. This study relates to the current research by highlighting that gender diversity management is a determinant of job performance, reinforcing the need to examine how gender and age diversity practices affect administrative job performance in state-owned tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which is considered suitable for examining the relationship between workforce diversity management and administrative job performance. This design allows the researcher to collect data directly from respondents using

structured instruments and to describe the existing phenomena as they naturally occur. The survey design also enables the investigation of correlations between subvariables of workforce diversity, such as gender and age, and administrative job performance, making it appropriate for testing the formulated hypotheses.

The population of the study consisted of all administrative staff in state-owned tertiary institutions in Rivers State, including universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. Based on records obtained from the institutions' human resource departments, the total population of administrative staff across these institutions is 1,245 employees. This population includes staff involved in academic administration, finance, student affairs, registry, and other operational units.

A sample of 295 administrative staff was selected for the study using stratified random sampling. The stratification was based on the type of institution (university, polytechnic, college of education) and department to ensure proportional representation of staff across different institutions and functional units. This approach increases the generalizability of the findings while maintaining manageable data collection.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The instrument was divided into two sections: Section A captured respondents' demographic characteristics, while Section B contained items measuring workforce diversity management (focusing on gender and age diversity) and administrative job performance. A five-point Likert scale was employed, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5), to quantify respondents' perceptions and experiences.

The questionnaire was subjected to content validity by two experts in Human Resource Management and Public Administration. A pilot study was conducted with 30 administrative staff from a state-owned tertiary institution outside the sample to assess reliability. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the constructs ranged from 0.78 to 0.85, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Permission to collect data was obtained from the management of the selected institutions. Respondents were approached individually, and the purpose of the study was explained. The questionnaires were administered personally and retrieved immediately after completion to ensure a high response rate.

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and mean scores) to summarize respondents' characteristics and responses. Inferential statistics, specifically Pearson correlation coefficient, were used to test the hypotheses regarding the relationship between workforce diversity subvariables (gender and age) and administrative job performance. The results were interpreted at a 0.05 level of significance to determine the strength and direction of the relationships.

Results

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between gender diversity management and administrative job performance in state-owned tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Table 1: Relationship Between Gender Diversity Management and Administrative Job Performance

		Gender Diversity Management	Administrative Job Performance
Gender Diversity Management	Pearson correlation	1.000	.420
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	295	295

Administrative Job Performance	Pearson correlation	.420	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	295	295

The results in Table 1 indicate a positive and significant relationship between gender diversity management and administrative job performance ($r = 0.420$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that as gender diversity is effectively managed in state-owned tertiary institutions, administrative staff performance improves. The significant correlation suggests that equitable gender practices, inclusive policies, and fair representation contribute to better task execution, teamwork, and overall administrative effectiveness. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, confirming that gender diversity management significantly influences administrative job performance in the institutions studied.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between age diversity management and administrative job performance in state-owned tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Table 2: Relationship Between Age Diversity Management and Administrative Job Performance

		Age Diversity Management	Administrative Job Performance
Age Diversity Management	Pearson correlation	1.000	.310
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	295	295
Administrative Job Performance	Pearson correlation	.310	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	295	295

The findings in Table 2 show a moderate positive and significant relationship between age diversity management and administrative job performance ($r = 0.310$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that administrative performance improves when the age diversity of staff is properly managed, balancing the experience of older employees with the innovative contributions of younger staff. The significant correlation confirms that addressing generational differences, encouraging mentorship, and facilitating knowledge sharing positively affects job performance. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected, showing that age diversity management contributes to improved administrative effectiveness in the studied tertiary institutions.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal a positive and significant relationship between gender diversity management and administrative job performance ($r = 0.420$, $p = 0.001$). This indicates that the more effectively gender diversity is managed within state-owned tertiary institutions, the higher the performance of administrative staff. The result aligns with the study by Gautam (2023), who found that gender diversity positively influences employee performance in educational institutions due to inclusive policies, equitable representation, and fair participation. Similarly, Ismaila and Usman (2023) reported that gender differences significantly impacted task performance among administrative staff in Nigerian tertiary institutions. This finding suggests that implementing

policies that promote gender inclusivity, such as equal opportunities for leadership roles and fair participation in decision-making, can enhance teamwork, communication, and overall administrative efficiency.

The study also found a moderate positive and significant relationship between age diversity management and administrative job performance ($r = 0.310$, $p = 0.012$). This indicates that administrative performance improves when institutions effectively manage the age composition of their staff. The result is consistent with the work of Kunze, Boehm, and Bruch (2011), who emphasized that combining the experience of older employees with the innovative contributions of younger employees enhances problem-solving and knowledge transfer, leading to improved organizational performance. Additionally, Gautam (2023) highlighted that age diversity fosters a dynamic work environment, promoting learning and adaptability among employees. In the context of Rivers State's tertiary institutions, this finding underscores the importance of mentoring programs, cross-generational collaboration, and policies that leverage the strengths of both younger and older administrative staff.

Overall, the study shows that both gender and age diversity management significantly contribute to administrative job performance, supporting the premise that workforce diversity is a strategic resource that can enhance institutional efficiency. These results are in agreement with Usulor, Afuecheta, and Igbokwe (2023), who found that effective workforce diversity practices in Nigerian public institutions led to improved employee performance when supported by leadership commitment, training, and participatory decision-making. The findings also align with the Resource-Based View theory (Barney, 1991), which posits that human resources, when managed as unique and valuable assets, can provide a competitive advantage. In this study, administrative staff represent a critical resource whose diverse characteristics can be harnessed to improve operational outcomes.

The study's findings have practical implications for state-owned tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Institutions that implement gender-sensitive policies, encourage equitable opportunities, and actively manage age diversity are likely to see improvements in administrative efficiency, employee satisfaction, and institutional effectiveness. This emphasizes the need for management to prioritize diversity management as a deliberate human resource strategy rather than a passive consideration. Leadership commitment, inclusive practices, and mentoring programs are critical tools for maximizing the benefits of workforce diversity.

Furthermore, the results highlight the interconnectedness of diversity dimensions. While gender diversity showed a stronger correlation with administrative performance ($r = 0.420$) compared to age diversity ($r = 0.310$), both dimensions are significant and complementary. This suggests that a holistic approach to workforce diversity considering multiple demographic factors can yield better performance outcomes than focusing on a single dimension. Institutions should therefore integrate diversity management into broader organizational policies and performance management systems to fully leverage the potential of their administrative workforce.

Overall, the study confirms that workforce diversity management, particularly gender and age diversity, is positively associated with administrative job performance in state-owned tertiary institutions. The findings corroborate prior empirical research and theoretical frameworks, demonstrating that structured diversity management practices can transform workforce heterogeneity into a strategic asset for institutional efficiency. State-owned tertiary institutions in Rivers State can enhance administrative performance and service delivery by adopting policies that recognize and strategically manage workforce diversity.

Conclusions

The study concludes that workforce diversity management, particularly gender and age diversity, has a significant positive impact on administrative job performance in state-owned tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Gender diversity management was found to have a stronger influence

on performance than age diversity, highlighting the importance of equitable policies, inclusive practices, and fair representation in enhancing administrative effectiveness. Age diversity management also contributed positively, demonstrating that combining the experience of older staff with the innovation of younger employees improves problem-solving, knowledge transfer, and teamwork.

The findings further support the notion that workforce diversity is a strategic human resource asset, consistent with the Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991), which emphasizes the role of unique and valuable resources in achieving organizational performance. Overall, the study establishes that state-owned tertiary institutions that actively manage workforce diversity can leverage the varied skills, experiences, and perspectives of their administrative staff to improve efficiency, collaboration, and service delivery.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following were recommended;

1. Institutional management should create and enforce policies that promote gender equality in recruitment, promotion, and decision-making processes to maximize administrative staff performance.
2. Institutions should develop mentoring programs, cross-generational collaboration initiatives, and knowledge-sharing platforms to ensure that both younger and older administrative staff contribute effectively to institutional goals.
3. Workforce diversity management should be embedded into broader human resource practices, including performance appraisal, training, and leadership development, to ensure diversity becomes a deliberate organizational strategy rather than a passive consideration.
4. Regular workshops and training programs should be conducted to sensitize staff and management on the value of diversity, conflict management, and effective collaboration across different demographic groups.
5. Institutions should establish monitoring systems to evaluate the effectiveness of diversity management practices, ensuring that policies translate into measurable improvements in administrative job performance.

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