

EXPLORING THE LINK BETWEEN ETHNIC AFFINITY AND EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH- SOUTH, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between ethnic affinity and employee productivity in public universities in south-south, Nigeria utilizing the quasi-experimental (cross-sectional survey) research design. The study adopted social identity theory as its base line theory. The target population of the study was 30,452 teaching staff gotten from twenty two (22) public universities in south-south region of Nigeria and a sample size of three hundred and eighty (380) was gotten using the Krecie and Morgan sample size determination table. The study utilized probability sampling technique. Primary data were collected through the use of structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics method and the correlation analysis technique. The correlation analysis was carried out to assess the relationship between ethnic affinity and employee productivity using Spearman Rank Order Correlation tool aided with SPSS version 26.0. The results showed a strong positive and significant relationship between ethnic affinity and measures of employee productivity (work quality, work quantity and work efficiency). It was concluded that organizations should prioritize ethnic diversity in order to harness a wider range of talents and insights, as collaborative involvement in the planning process fosters a more inclusive and supportive work environment which could drive towards greater innovation, profitability and increased employee productivity. It was recommended among others actions, that management of public universities in south-south, Nigeria implement a strict zero tolerance policy regarding harassment, bullying and discrimination so as to foster an inclusive workplace. Additionally, it is essential to identify and address biases while taking appropriate steps to prevent all forms of discrimination in order to ensure a safe and respectful workplace for all.

Keywords: Ethnic affinity, diversity, Productivity, work efficiency, employee, organizations

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century business environment is highly dynamic and ever changing, these changes are largely due to globalization and liberalization of trade and business which has altered the face of business including the composition of employees in the workplace (Tamunomiebi & John-Eke, 2020). Hence, the belief that globalization and liberalization of trade has created a diverse workforce in most industries and sectors in terms of age, gender, race, ethnicity, profession, religion etc. Rhode and Packel (2014) defined a diverse workforce as consisting of social identities such as values, experiences, background, preferences and behaviors. The integration of diverse ethnic background in the workforce is a vital step towards creating a more representative and effective business landscape. As the business world continues to evolve, it is essential that companies prioritize diversity and inclusion, recognizing the value of diverse perspectives and experiences is key to driving success and increased employee productivity.

Nowadays, organizations are becoming more and more concerned on how to increase the productivity of employees (Burke & Hsieh, 2006; Yunus & Ernawati, 2018). One of the most significant challenges organizations face in achieving productivity is the inherent bias within activities as a result of ethnic affinity. Lack of understanding due to cultural and language differences has caused unnecessary stigmatization, fear and even discriminating behavior. Though, ethnic discrimination remains a persistent challenge and a destructive issue in the workplace and across Nigeria, sabotaging the continents prosperous diversity and the potential for a harmonious environment (Hutchinson & Anthony, 2016). It is alarming to see how divisions based on ethnicity continue to fuel conflict, economic disparity, and social exclusion in many regions. This discrimination not only violates basic human rights but also stifles the progress and stability that Nigerians so desperately needs.

Hechter (2019) assert that to mitigate legal risk and foster positive work environment, organizations are adopting a more deliberate approach to diversity and inclusion such as embracing ethnic diversity. Ethnic groups play a vital role in ensuring an inclusive work environment. Ethnic groups within the educational

sector provide a diverse workforce and serve multifaceted purposes. They offer platforms for employees to voice their concerns; celebrate their identities and access resources tailored to their unique experiences (Phinney & Alipuria, 2019). Ethnic group specifically, aims to unite individuals from diverse backgrounds encompassing varied cultural identities, including language, tradition, social norms and shared attributes (Laurence, Schmid & Hewstone, 2018). Prioritizing such enriches workplaces with fresh perspectives, fostering greater acceptance, enhanced creativity, informed decision making, increased productivity and a culture of inclusivity.

Smith (2018) contends that embracing ethnic diversity is a necessity for organizations striving to remain relevant and competitive in today's diverse landscape. Organizations must navigate a range of obstacles, including unconscious bias, cultural barriers, difficulty finding suitable candidates, resistance to change, and lack of diversity in talent pipelines, and limited resources and budget (Ahmed, 2019; Fairfax, 2005). It has become imperative for progressive research on ethnic group to pay attention to specific dimensions within that construct, especially as it affects employee productivity, since employees are central towards the attainment of goals. While existing literature shows that studies have been done on the influence of ethnic group on productivity and other important outcomes within various industries, there are still subtle gaps identified. Understanding the dynamics of these groups is crucial for educators, administrators and policy makers seeking to create more equitable and inclusive educational environment in Nigeria, which is vital to our holistic understanding of workforce diversity in a multi-ethnic country like Nigeria. As a departure from previous studies, this study aims to investigate the impact of ethnic affinity on employee productivity in public universities in south-south, Nigeria. The research seeks to provide valuable insights for organizations looking to boost the productivity of employees by embracing ethnic affinity.

The purpose of the study is therefore to examine the relationship between ethnic affinity and employee productivity in public universities in south-south, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study include:

- i. To examine the relationship between ethnic affinity and work quality in public universities in south-south, Nigeria.
- ii. To examine the relationship between ethnic affinity and work quantity in public universities in south-south, Nigeria.
- iii. To examine the relationship between ethnic affinity and work efficiency in public universities in south-south, Nigeria

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework shows the predictor variable (ethnic affinity) and the criterion variable which is employee productivity with the following measures work quality, work quantity and work efficiency as shown in figure 1 below.

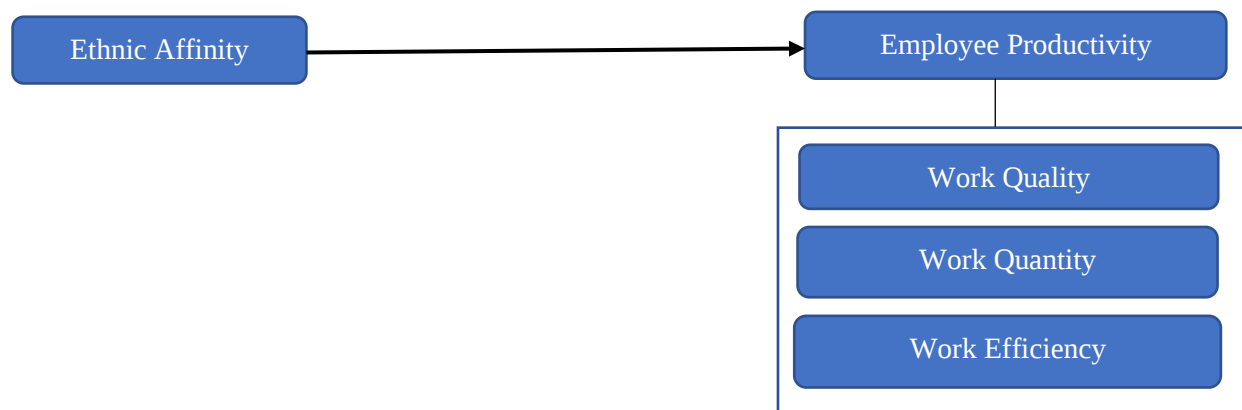


Figure 1: Ethnic affinity and employee productivity

Source: Desk Research (2024)

The following research questions were put up in line with addressing the relationship between ethnic affinity and employee productivity in public universities in south-south, Nigeria. These are stated as follows:

- i. What is the relationship between ethnic affinity and work quality in public universities in south-south, Nigeria?

- ii. What is the relationship between ethnic affinity and work quantity in public universities in south-south, Nigeria?
- iii. What is the relationship between ethnic affinity and work efficiency in public universities in south-south, Nigeria?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

The study considers some theories that relate to some of the critical issues under study. One of these theories underpinning this study is the social identity theory (SIT) developed by Henri Tajfel (1979) as cited in Hogg (2016); SIT posited that individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups based on shared characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, nationality, religion and other defining features to build their own social identity. People then derive their self-concept and self-esteem from membership in these social groups. In the ethnic affinity context, social identity theory provides a useful framework for understanding group behaviour with regards to belongingness and attitudes towards members of other groups (Callero, 2015). It can be anticipated that a shared group identity among the majority of team members will positively impact team cohesion, overall team performance and employee productivity.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Ethnic Affinity

The concept of ethnic affinity is the most basic, from which the others are derivative. Ethnic affinity is referred to as the collective phenomenon (Brass, 2023). Ethnic affinity itself is an abstract concept which includes an implicit reference to both collective and individual aspects of the phenomenon. Elloukmani, Oosterlynck and Raeymaeckers (2024) described ethnic affinity as a collective phenomenon that has a shared common name, a shared myth of common descent, shared historical memories, one or more differentiating elements of common culture, an association with a specific “homeland,” and a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population (Gans, 2019). A subjective sense of being a group—that

is, subjective identification with the group by its members—is essential (Phinney & Alipuria, 2019). These necessary and sufficient markers of ethnic affinity might be developed to varying degrees of strength for different groups, but they will all be present to some degree. Ethnic affinity is a construct rather than a primordial phenomenon (Ahmed, 2019). Nonetheless, ethnic affinity group is subjectively experienced as an objective reality by those who subscribe to an ethnic category.

The subjective dimension of ethnic groups refers to what Barth's work (cited in Horowitz, 2015), has been known as ethnic boundaries (Horowitz, 2015). These are socio-psychological boundaries and refer to the fact of group-inclusion and exclusion. There are two types of ethnic boundaries, those from within the ethnic group (internal) and those from without the ethnic group (external). In many ways, the dynamics of inter-ethnic relations depends on the relationship between these two boundaries. The internal boundaries are the area of self-inclusion in the group. They overlap with the process of self-identity. They articulate with the feelings of sympathy and loyalty toward members of the same ethnic group. The external boundaries are the perimeter of exclusion of membership; it is the demarcation of the space of the outsiders (Smith, 2017; Brass, 2011).

In a multi-ethnic society in which members of different ethnic groups interact and compete with one another, the existence of internal boundaries will inevitably produce external boundaries. Persons will be identified by others as belonging to one or another ethnic group even if they do not actively share anymore any cultural patterns with that ethnic group as long as a link to their ancestors can be made. Hutchinson and Anthony (2016) posit that identification by others in turn usually stimulates self-identification and may condition new forms of social organization. Hence, ethnic affinity is a matter of a double boundary, a boundary from within, maintained by the socialization process and a boundary from without established by the process of inter-group relations (Smith, 2018).

Concept of Employee Productivity

Employee productivity has become an important facet of work culture in the organization. Every organization strives to have a productive workforce because this is critical for the growth and sustainability of the organization. Employee Productivity is a measure of economic performance that compares the amount of goods and services produced (output) by an employee with the amount of inputs used to produce those goods and services in a specific period of time. Employee productivity is broadly defined as the efficiency of a worker, and it is important for an organization (Ma & Ye, 2019). According to Kihama and Wainaina (2019), employee productivity estimates the individual contribution of each employee in an organization. Employee productivity is the degree to which employees execute their duties and responsibilities to produce required volume or value of output (Okochi & Ateke, 2020). Employee's productivity is one factor used to evaluate human capital in an organization. Cardy and Leonard (2004, as cited in Bhatti & Qureshi, 2017) conceive employee productivity as outcomes, results and accomplishments emanating from an employee. Employee productivity also represents results of behaviors and actions of employees that result to attainment of organizational goals. Employee productivity is hinged on ability and motivation (Okochi & Ateke, 2020).

Measures of Productivity

Work Quality

A firm's or organizations most significant asset is its human capital, which may assist businesses in achieving their objectives. Werdhiastutie, Suhariadi and Partiwi (2020) narrate the achievement of company goals comes from the individual spirit of its human resources, which is closely related to achievement motivation. The development of high-quality human resources is challenging. The business must be dedicated to this objective, as must its personnel. Sabuhari, Sudiro, Irawanto and Rahayu (2020) contend that the quality of the work that employees create is significantly influenced by human resources. The quality of employees' work is the best performance that each individual can give. The company can obtain good quality work if the supporting factors in creating good quality work are fulfilled.

Work Quantity

Quantity of work is a critical aspect that managers and supervisors consider during a performance review; it refers to the amount of work an employee completes within a given period (Podsakoff, Ahearne & MacKenzie, 2017). It can be assessed by evaluating the number of tasks, projects or assignments completed, and their respective deadlines met. Barling, Rogers and Kelloway (2015) describe quantity of work as the productivity level, time management and ability to meet deadlines. Bavelas and Lee (2018) posit that work quantity is the amount of work performed, that is, the volume of work produced in relation to the amount of work requiring completion or attention. Kallio, Kallio and Grossi (2017) affirms that work quantity is the completion of work on schedule which further explains the extent to which an employee completes work within given or reasonable time limits.

Work Efficiency

Efficiency is very important in the activities of employees. Not only must firms do the right thing such as offering high-quality products, but, they must also produce their products efficiently (Everard & Burrow, 2011). The field of management associate efficiency with how well a relevant action is performed, that is, “doing things right”. According to Storto and Gončiaruk (2017), employee efficiency means the ability of an organization to derive maximum output from a minimum input of a given quantity of resources. Employee efficiency is defined as the ability of organizations to do things the right way in the face of competition and scarce resource. Employee efficiency is the ability to avoid wasting materials, energy, efforts, money and time in doing something or in producing a desired result (Madanhire & Mbohwa, 2016).

Empirical Review

Ethnic Affinity and Employee Productivity

Wale-Oshinowo (2021) conducted a study on the influence of religion and ethnicity on employee productivity in oil servicing companies in Lagos, Nigeria. The focus of this study is to assess how ethnicity and religion (as dimensions of cultural diversity) influence employee productivity in selected Oil Servicing

Companies in Lagos State, Nigeria. The assumption is that when individuals from different ethnic and religious backgrounds are brought together to work in an organization, their sense-making of the dominant culture of that organization would be guided by a variety of underlying factors, which could subsequently impact on the way they discharge their duties. In an attempt to examine some of these dimensions of culture within the oil and gas industry, they employed a multi-paradigm approach to assess how cultural diversity affects employee productivity. Using structured questionnaire and purposive sampling technique, data was collected from 100 respondents in the oil and gas industry. The study findings suggest that ethnicity and religion influences employee productivity within the workplace with important implications for future research and practice.

Green (2018) did a study on ethnic affinity groups as learning communities. The purpose of this paper was to explore the role of ethnic affinity in a multi-national, for-profit corporation. The paper focused on how ethnic group facilitate learning. A qualitative case study approach was used to examine six social identity based ethnic group in one multi-national for-profit organization headquartered in the USA. The study found that ethnic groups facilitate learning and development activities in order to support their membership. Ethnic affinity, operating as communities of practice, also engaged in informal learning opportunities that were designed to shift perspectives of non-members and executive-level leaders in the organization.

Setati, Zhuwao, Ngirande and Ndlovu (2019) *investigated* the effects of gender and ethnic diversity on the performance of employees in a selected higher education institution in South Africa. A cross-sectional research design was used. A stratified random sample (n = 258) was chosen by dividing employees into homogeneous strata of academic and non-academic employees. A self-administered questionnaire was used to gather data. Pearson product moment correlation and multiple regression analysis were performed. The results show that gender diversity and ethnic diversity are positively and significantly related to employee performance. The study recommends that higher education institutions implement effective diversity

management policies and strategies to improve the effectiveness of gender and ethnic diversity towards the performance of employees.

Beziibwe (2015) examined the relationship between ethnic diversity and organizational performance in university of Venda. The results also show that ethnic diversity is positively and significantly related to employee performance ($r = 0.277$, $p = 0.00$). This means that ethnic diversity positively affects employee performance at the University of Venda. According to the social identity, social categorization and similarity attraction theories, when a workforce is ethnically diverse, it could result in psychological processes like in-group liking, in-group attraction, and worst of all, in-group favouritism. This could also bring about many negative outcomes like less communication, less cooperation, less cohesiveness and even conflicts (Tajfel & Turner, 2016). From this position, one could argue that ethnic affinity group contributes towards improving the workers disposition and co-workers; thus enhancing outcomes of work quality, work quantity and work efficiency. In line with the literature review presented above. The following hypotheses were formulated.

- H₀₁:** There is no significant relationship between ethnic affinity and work quality in public universities in South-South, Nigeria.
- H₀₂:** There is no significant relationship between ethnic affinity and work quantity in public universities in South-South, Nigeria.
- H₀₃:** There is no significant relationship between ethnic affinity and work efficiency in public universities in South-South of Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This study as an exploratory study adopted a quasi-experimental (cross-sectional survey) research design suitable for this study. The study population comprised of 30452 teaching staff gotten from the twenty-two (22) public universities in south-south region of Nigeria as enlisted in the National Universities Commission

(2024). This study adopted the stratified sampling technique considering the numbers of respondents were broken up into unique groups. A structured close ended five-point likert scale questionnaire were administered to the sample size of three hundred and eighty (380) teaching staff of the twenty-two (22) public universities in the south-south region of Nigeria. The reliability test of the structured questionnaires was ascertained using the intra-rater test instrument-the Cronbach alpha reliability test tool, with the 0.70 benchmark was adopted as base score for the research. At the primary level of our analysis, this study adopted the descriptive statistical tool such as mean, standard deviation, frequency tables, simple percentages, bar charts and histograms to address the demographic and the univariate distribution and descriptive properties of the study while for the bivariate analysis, the Spearman Rank Order Correlation tool was employed at the secondary level of analysis, to test the hypothesized statements. All the statistical analyses were performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0.; because this version has the ability to transform scaled data into discrete or continued data and vice versa.

$$rho = 1 - \frac{6\sum d^2}{N(N^2 - 1)}$$

Where, rho = coefficient of rank correlation.

d = difference in paired ranks,

$\sum$ = sum of items

n = number of cases

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

Bivariate Analysis

The study adopts a criterion and significance value of 0.05, based on its level of confidence (95%). **Decision rule:** The decision rule which applies for all bivariate test outcomes is stated as follows: where $P < 0.05$, reject hypothesis on the basis or evident of significant relationship; and where $P > 0.05$, accept hypothesis on the basis of insignificant relationship between the variables. The extent of influence is on this basis assessed using the rho interpretations provided by Bryman and Bell (2015) as shown in table 1:

Table 1: Description on Range of correlation (ρ) values and the corresponding level of association

Range of r with positive and negative sign values	Strength of Association
$\pm 0.80 - 0.99$	very strong
$\pm 0.60 - 0.79$	Strong
$\pm 0.40 - 0.59$	Moderate
$\pm 0.20 - 0.39$	Weak
$\pm 0.00 - 0.19$	Very weak

Source: Adopted from Ahiauzu & Asawo, 2016, *Advance Social Research Methods*

The positive (+) sign in the values of (ρ) indicates a positive relationship, while the negative (-) sign in the value of (ρ) indicates an indirect/negative or inverse relationship. Thus, the sign of the ρ explains the direction of association between the two variables.

Relationship between Ethnic Affinity and Measures of Employee Productivity

Table 2: Correlation between Ethnic Affinity and Measures of Employee Productivity

			Ethnic Affinity	Work Quality	Work Quantity	Work Efficiency
Spearman's rho	Ethnic Affinity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.762**	.829**	.715**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	359	359	359	359
	Work Quality	Correlation Coefficient	.762**	1.000	.892**	.853**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
		N	359	359	359	359
	Work Quantity	Correlation Coefficient	.829**	.892**	1.000	.832**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
		N	359	359	359	359
	Work Efficiency	Correlation Coefficient	.715**	.853**	.832**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
		N	359	359	359	359

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

Source: SPSS Output, 2024

Table 2 shows the result of correlation matrix obtained for ethnic affinity and measures of employee productivity. Also displayed in the table is the statistical test of significance (p - value), which makes us able to answer our research question and generalize our findings to the study population.

RQ 1-3: What is the relationship between ethnic affinity and measures of employee productivity in public universities in South-South, Nigeria?

The correlation coefficient (ρ) result in table 2 was used to answer research question 1. Table 2 shows a Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient (ρ) of 0.762 on the relationship between ethnic affinity and work quality. This value implies that a strong relationship between ethnic affinity and work quality. The direction of the relationship indicates that the relationship is positive, implying that an increase in the work quality of the employees was as a result of the presence of ethnic affinity. Similarly, the R^2 value of 0.581 derived from the square of 0.762 indicates that an increase in ethnic affinity brings about 58.1% increases in work quality in public universities in south-south, Nigeria. Therefore, there is a strong positive correlation between ethnic affinity and work quality in public universities in south-south, Nigeria.

Secondly, table 2 also shows a Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient (ρ) of 0.829 on the relationship between ethnic affinity and work quantity. This value implies that a very strong relationship between ethnic affinity and work quantity. The direction of the relationship indicates that the relationship is positive, implying that an increase in the work quantity of the employees was brought about by the presence of ethnic affinity. Similarly, the R^2 value of 0.687 derived from the square of 0.829 indicates that an increase in ethnic affinity resulted in 68.7% increase in work quantity in public universities in south-south, Nigeria. Therefore, there is a strong positive correlation between ethnic affinity and work quantity in public universities in south-south, Nigeria.

Finally, table 2 also shows a Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient (ρ) of 0.715 on the relationship between ethnic affinity and work efficiency. This value implies that there is a strong relationship between ethnic affinity and work efficiency. The direction of the relationship indicates that the relationship is positive, implying that an increase in the work efficiency of the employees was as a result of the presence of ethnic affinity. Similarly, the R^2 value of 0.511 derived from the square of 0.715 indicates that an increase in ethnic affinity resulted in 51.1% increase in work efficiency in public universities in south-south, Nigeria.

Therefore, there is a strong positive correlation between ethnic affinity and work efficiency in public universities in south-south, Nigeria.

Therefore, to enable us accept or reject hypotheses **HO₁**, **HO₂** and **HO₃** as well as generalize our findings to the study population the p- value was used as shown in table 2.

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between ethnic affinity and work quality in public universities in south-south, Nigeria.

Displayed in the table 2 is the statistical test of significance (p - value), which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtain from table 2, the tests of significance show that the relationship between ethnic affinity and work quality in public universities in south-south, Nigeria is significant ($p=0.000<0.05$). Therefore, based on observed findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between ethnic affinity and work quality in public universities in south-south, Nigeria.

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between ethnic affinity and work quantity in public universities in south-south, Nigeria.

Similarly displayed in the table 2 is the statistical test of significance (p - value), which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtain from table 2, the test of significance shows that the relationship between ethnic affinity and work quantity in public universities in south-south, Nigeria is significant ($p=0.000<0.05$). Therefore, based on observed findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between ethnic affinity and work quantity in public universities in south-south, Nigeria.

HO₃: There is no significant relationship between ethnic affinity and work efficiency in public universities in south-south, Nigeria.

Similarly displayed in the table 2 is the statistical test of significance (p - value), which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtain from table 2, the test of significance shows that the relationship between ethnic affinity and work efficiency in public universities in south-south, Nigeria is significant ($p=0.000<0.05$). Therefore, based on observed findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between ethnic affinity and work efficiency in public universities in south-south, Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The outcomes of the analysis on how ethnic affinity relates with the measures of employee productivity in public universities in south-south, Nigeria revealed that there is a relationship between ethnic affinity and the measures of employee productivity (work quality, work quantity and work efficiency). These findings collaborate the views of Wale-Oshinowo (2021) who conducted a study on the influence of religion and ethnicity on employee productivity in oil servicing companies in Lagos, Nigeria. The focus of his study was to assess how ethnicity and religion (as dimensions of cultural diversity) influenced employee productivity in selected Oil Servicing Companies in Lagos State, Nigeria. The assumption was that when individuals from different ethnic and religious backgrounds are brought together to work in an organization, their sense-making of the dominant culture of that organization would be guided by a variety of underlying factors, which could subsequently impact on the way they discharge their duties.

In an attempt to examine some of these dimensions of culture within the oil and gas industry, they employed a multi-paradigm approach to assess how cultural diversity affects employee productivity. Using structured questionnaire and purposive sampling technique, data was collected from 100 respondents in the oil and gas industry. The study findings suggested that ethnicity and religion influence employee productivity

within the workplace with important implications for future research and practice. These findings also agreed with that of Green (2018) study on ethnic affinity groups as learning communities. The study found that ethnic groups facilitate learning and development activities in order to support their membership. Ethnic affinity, operating as communities of practice, also engaged in informal learning opportunities that were designed to shift perspectives of non-members and executive-level leaders in the organization.

Li *et al* (2023) study finding showed that consumers' cultural backgrounds affect their evaluations on products or services. They argued that ethnic affinity between consumers and service providers can affect their evaluations and online engagement after consumption. However, given the results of this study, it seems that the management of the institutions studied, is committed to managing the ethnic diversity of their workforce in ways that will help the organization. The majority of the employees agreed that they cooperate well with fellow colleagues of the same as well as different ethnic background, meaning that there is no conflict irrespective of their languages. The finding is consistent with those of Pitts (2009) and Weiliang, Mun, Fong and Yuan (2011), who indicated that there is a significant relationship between ethnic diversity and employee performance. According to these studies, in ethnically diverse organizations, the ethnic identities of team members are less salient and, therefore, create less disruption to employee performance. From this position, one could argue that ethnic affinity group contributes to the provision of safe space for employees to share their experiences and perspectives; thus enhancing outcomes of work quality, work quantity and work efficiency.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the study concluded that integrating diverse ethnic background in the workforce would bring together individuals from different backgrounds and experiences, companies can tap into a wealth of creative ideas, approaches, and solutions, leading to improved decision-making, enhanced innovation, and more effective problem-solving. In addition, the study concluded that collaborative involvement in the planning process fosters a more inclusive and supportive work environment which could

drive towards greater innovation, profitability and increased outcomes of employee productivity. Embracing ethnic diversity is thus a necessity for organizations striving to remain relevant and competitive in today's diverse landscape. The study therefore recommends the following:

- i. That management of public universities in south-south, Nigeria implement a strict zero tolerance policy regarding harassment, bullying and discrimination so as to foster an inclusive workplace. Additionally, it is essential to identify and address biases while taking appropriate steps to prevent all forms of discrimination in order to ensure a safe and respectful workplace for all.
- ii. Management of public universities in south-south, Nigeria must actively advocate for diverse hiring practices and lead by example in promoting an inclusive workplace. They should engage in proactive recruitment and talent development by broadening recruitment efforts to attract diverse talent pools. Best practices in recruitment involve broadening the sources from which candidates are drawn. Management should partner with organizations that support underrepresented groups, utilizing diverse job boards, and conducting targeted outreach programs in order to build a more inclusive talent pipeline.
- iii. Management of public universities in south-south, Nigeria should promote inclusivity in the workplace by provide training and education programs on unconscious bias and cultural awareness. Initiatives to enhance inclusivity could include regular diversity training, creating affinity groups, and ensuring that all employees feel their voices are heard. Regular audits of company culture and policies can help identify areas needing improvement, ensuring the work environment supports diversity at all levels. Continuous training and awareness programs are crucial to maintaining focus on diversity goals and enhancing the outcomes of employee productivity.
- iv. Management of public universities in south-south, Nigeria should set the tone for diversity and inclusion, and companies should engage with diverse stakeholders and communities, monitor and

track diversity metrics and progress, and hold leadership accountable for diversity and inclusion goals. Their commitment can set the tone for the entire organization, influencing attitudes and practices throughout the business. Leaders should establish clear diversity goals and objectives celebrate and recognize ethnic and racial diversity, Foster open dialogues on the importance of diversity and its impact, and evaluate existing policies and adapt them to prioritize diversity and inclusion in order to enhance the outcomes of productivity in the organization.

v.

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