



# Impact of Workplace Diversity on Employee Performance A Case of Some Selected Private Universities in Ghana

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## ABSTRACT

The authors explore how the milieu of workplace diversity affects the relationship between employee and performance. In particular, we theorize and empirically examine the moderating effects of four (4) categories of diversity context variables: age, gender, ethnicity, and educational background. The authors perform analyses on 175 out of 320 respondents consisting of academic and administrative staff of four selected private universities in Ghana. The results showed, for example, that workplace diversity has an overall influence on employee performance, however, educational diversity has more effect on employee performance in the universities compared to the other competing variables used in this study. Age and educational diversity had a significant impact on employee performance in the universities whilst gender and ethnicity diversity had no influence on their performance. We discuss future research directions regarding diversity, workgroup context, and performance outcomes and outline some recommendations for administrators and university leaders.

## KEYWORDS

Organization, Performance, Private Universities, Workplace Diversity

## 1. INTRODUCTION

With the world that is changing or revolving constantly, diversity management has become a popular term used in modern society and management practice. Many organisations around the world have developed policies that aim to promote and manage diversity. Diversity management refers to the voluntary organizational actions that are designed to create greater inclusion of employees from various backgrounds into the formal and informal organizational structures through deliberate policies and programs (Hays-Thomas, 2004; Kaiser & Prange, 2004; Nyambegera, 2002; Özbilgin, Mulholland, Tatli, & Worman, 2008; Palmi, 2001; Shifnas & Sutha, 2016).

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This article, originally published under IGI Global's copyright on July 1, 2019 will proceed with publication as an Open Access article starting on February 3, 2021 in the gold Open Access journal, International Journal of R&D Innovation Strategy (converted to gold Open Access January 1, 2021), and will be distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and production in any medium, provided the author of the original work and original publication source are properly credited.

Emuze and James (2013) are of the view that organisations which adopt diversity as a source of innovation, growth and development are more likely to show behavioural support and facilitate its implementation with greater focus, persistence, and effort. With respect to current realities threatening organisations today, it might be concluded that workforce diversity may create opportunities or pose challenges to the workplace (Osita-Ejikeme; Ugwuzor, 2014). In a Nation like Ghana with various ethnic nationalities and dialects, as well as different social and religious backgrounds, the subject of diversity in the workplace, particularly among groups, cannot be over emphasized. The study therefore seeks to find out the relationship between workplace diversity and employee performance.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Concept of Diversity**

According to Green, López, Wysocki, and Kepner (2002) cited from Esty, Griffin, and Hirsch (1995), diversity is defined as recognizing, accepting, accommodating, appreciating, and celebrating differences among people with reverence to age, class, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, race, sexual orientation, spiritual practice, and public assistance status whilst Naqvi, Ishtiaq, Kanwal, Butt, and Nawaz (2013) defined diversity as the existence of a workforce in which personalities come from different socio-cultural and religious backgrounds.

Workplace diversity is similarly defined as intergroup relations, which play out alongside one another in communication and interaction. It develops a host of complexities related to diversity (Brouwer & Boros, 2010). Lee and Gilbert (2014) further clarified that workforce diversity based on age, gender and ethnicity cannot be viewed in a similar way as workforce diversity that is based on organisational roles and individual aptitudes.

Roberge, Lewicki, Hietapelto, and Abdyldeaeva (2011) was of the opinion that managing a diverse workforce is complicated and thus needs organisations' total attention in terms of implementing proper and clear practices that will enhance the performance of the organisation in the short and long term. In addition, Mahadevan, Primecz, and Romani (2014), explained that dysfunctional workforce diversity management arises due to lack of communication between management and employees on how workforce diversity benefits the organisation.

### **2.2 Concept of Employee Performance**

According to Okoro and Washington (2012), employee performance is the effective discharge of duty for which one is hired. That is, how well an employee is fulfilling their requirement for the job. In the words of Tinofirei (2011) as cited by Zhuwao (2017), employee performance is the "successful completion of tasks by a selected individual, as a set and measured by a supervisor or organisation, to pre-defined acceptable standards, while efficiently and effectively utilising available resources within a changing environment".

Mwatumwa (2016) sees employee performance as a self-perceived performance of an employee in doing their day to day activities

### **2.4 Workplace Diversity Challenges**

Embracing diversity solely cannot help organisations achieve success; organisations need to manage it well (Farrer, 2004). According to Oyewunmi (2018), a major challenge of the diverse workforce is the omission of certain individuals or groups grounded on differences such as, gender; age; ethnicity or cultural affiliation; religion; social class; disability etc.

### **2.5 Gender Diversity**

Gender diversity implies psychological disparities and experience that socially or culturally attached to being a male or a female within the organization (Ali, Kulik, & Metz, 2011). Connell

and Messerschmidt (2013) view gender as the description of masculinity or femininity of people. According to Ngao and Mwangi (2013), gender often plays a significant role in affecting employee performance, performance ratings, and related human resource decisions.

Ivanova-Stenzel and Kübler (2011) in their research examined the influence of gender differences in teamwork and team competition using wages. They discovered that performance depended on both the combination of gender and incentive scheme not just the incentive scheme. They also identified a gap between the performance of men and women; men performed better than women when paid according to joint output and when the competition is between teams of the same gender. They advised that combinations of incentive scheme and gender composition in teams should be avoided.

Some researchers also indicate that the absenteeism rate among women is higher than men, which requires the development of initiatives to manage diversity to overcome these problems, such as flexible working hours initiatives and telework. Jayne and Dipboye (2004) argued that gender diversity does not automatically bring positive result such as increased motivation, improved talents, build commitment, and decline conflict.

## 2.6 Age Diversity

Backes-Gellner and Veen (2009) define age diversity as generational differences among individuals or employees in a corporation and the values and perspectives attached to each. People tend to share a place with their generation no matter the experience they share (Akpakip, 2017). Johnson and Johnson (2010) and Zemke, Raines, and Filipczak (2013) view generation as a set of individuals born and living in the same period, who have mutual attitudes, preferences, knowledge and experiences that affect their thoughts, values, beliefs and behaviors. Pitt-Catsoupes, Matz-Costa, and Besen (2009) categorised the age group present at work into six, namely: traditionalists (born before 1946), older boomers (born 1946 to 1954), younger boomers (born 1955 to 1964), older generation X'ers (born 1965 to 1971), younger generation X'ers (born 1972 to 1980) and generation Y/millennials (born after 1980).

Backes-Gellner and Veen (2009) observed that age diversity can negatively affect productivity due to differences in the values and preferences of distinct age groups. Joshi and Jackson (2003) observed that there was no impact of age differences on reports of work group or objectives measure group performance.

However, Boehm and Kunze (2015) disputed that an age heterogeneous workforce yields a host of numerous skills, intellectual styles, morals, and preferences that may result in increased productivity. Josef (2010) was of the opinion that older employees have the tendency of opposing change and due to advancement in age, they might have failing memories and are more likely to be absent from work due to ill health and injuries, which could be the result of their being less energetic and enthusiastic unlike the younger employees. Additionally, since jobs are performed the same way by all the different generations of employees of an organisations, the unwillingness of the older employees to learn new skill and acquire new knowledge affect decline in work capacity and performance. The resulting effect of these are the main causes for their decline in work capacity and performance (Akpakip, 2017).

## 2.7 Ethnicity Diversity

Ethnic diversity refers to the heterogeneity in the mother religion, languages, cultures and races that exists among employees in a firm (Hoogendoorn & Van Praag, 2012). Rasul and Rogger (2015) claim that ethnic diversity has an effect on productivity by influencing how people feel motivated about their jobs, the level of efficiency in the firm, employee satisfaction with their job and the quality of products and services that a firm produces. Østergaard, Timmermans, and Kristinsson (2011) observed that ethnic diversity boosts creativity and innovativeness in the firm by expanding the perspectives and viewpoints in the firm. Please cite references to suggest that it can also decline same.

## 2.8 Education Background Diversity

Conferring to Combs (2002), organisational leaders implement educational diversity initiatives in efforts to motivate and encourage individuals to work effectively with others so that organizational goals are achieved. Tracy and David (2011) in their study about the effects of education background diversity towards the employee performance in Britain found that employers commonly reject employing employees whose training, experience, or education is judged to be inadequate.

bestowing to Eduard (2010), employees who are less educated are prone to suffer inferiority complex which affect their performance to a large extent. He argued that such employees who develop a persistent feeling of being inferior end up feeling socially insecure and less confident at work. He concluded that the lack of confidence would greatly damage their performance and could even make them develop a negative attitude toward other employees and the entire organisation.

## 2.9 Diversity and Employee Performance

Chew, Lee, Tan, and Tee (2011) investigated the effect of work force diversify (gender, age, ethnic and education background of the employees) on employee performance. The results showed there is increased performance in a diverse workforce. They observed that age diversity has no influence on performance.

Selvaraj (2015) in his study “The Effects of Work Force Diversity on Employee Performance in Singapore Organisations” was of the opinion that workforce diversity yields positive benefits when properly managed; if not, it could lead to negative results. His analysis revealed that age, gender and ethnicity had no statistically significant impact on the performance of employees. He recommended that human resource programmes suggested by the employees to improve the effectiveness of workforce diversity should be worked on.

Magoshi and Chang (2009) in their research found workforce diversity to be a significant factor in explaining a variation in employee performance. Whilst Mwatumwa (2016) in his research found out that workforce diversity does not influence employee work performance at the County Government of Mombasa as ethnicity, gender and educational background did not portray significant effect on performance, positively nor negatively.

Maingi and Makori (2015) showed that, work diversity in terms of education and ethnicity had and influence employee performance. They however suggested that there should be effective policies and strategies regarding the education background diversity and ethnic diversity in the workforce for better employee performance.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The population of the study consisted of academic and administrative staff of four (4) selected private universities in Ghana (Table 1). The questionnaire was developed to measure diversity on the basis of instruments used by Chew et al. (2011). The sample size was selected using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table for a finite population. A sample size of 175 out of 320 was utilized for the study. The sample for individual universities was attained by implementing the stratified sampling technique which ensures better coverage of the population.

The questionnaire comprised of three sections. Section 1 consisted of demographic attributes like gender, age, level of the respondents and institution. Section 2 comprised of questions related to gender, age, ethnicity and educational diversity measured on a 5-point Likert scale anchored by “Strongly Disagree” (1) to “Strongly Agree” (5). Section 3 comprised of questions related to employee performance also measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to calculate the Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and Multiple Regression Analysis.

**Table 1. Population and sample size**

Universities	Population	Sample
Data Link Institute	86	46
Fountain Head University College	69	38
Central University	122	67
Methodist University College	44	24
Total	320	175

Source: Field work (2019)

Ethical issues that were taken into account in this study were respecting the rights of the research participants, acknowledging the research sites and reporting the research fully and honestly (Stuart & Barnes, 2005). Participants were informed about the nature and purpose of the study. The researcher sought the consent of the participants and assured of their confidentiality and anonymity of the information that was given. The study was done in four Ghanaian private universities due to proximity as the four universities were in the same community. Provide geographical location.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Demographic Analysis

Sharma (2004) states that demography is the study of the size, territorial distribution, and composition of population, changes therein, and the components of such changes, which may be identified as natality, mortality, territorial movement (migration), and social mobility (change of status).

The distribution presented in Table 2 shows that approximately 68.6% of the respondents are males while 31.4% were females. It can be deduced from the pattern that majority of the respondents were males. The age distribution indicates 23.4% of the respondents were within 20-29years, 52% were within 30-39years and 24.6% were within 40-49years. From the pattern, majority of the respondents were within 30-39years.

The ethnicity of the respondents shows that 9.7% of the respondents were Gas, 19.4% were Fantes, 11.4% were Ashantis, 16.6% were Ga Dangbe, and 13.7% were from other ethnicities. The educational level of the respondents showed that 37.7% of the respondents have obtained bachelor's degrees, 53.1% have obtained master's degrees and 9.1% has obtained doctoral which can be deduced from the pattern that majority of the respondents have obtained master's degrees.

The name of the institution of the respondents indicates that 25.3% of the respondents were from Data Link Institute, 22% were from Fountainhead University College, 38.7% and 14% were from Methodist University College.

### 4.2 Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO) of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was used to measure the reliability of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha is a measure of the internal consistency of a test or scale (Taber, 2018). It is stated as a digit amid 0 and 1. A reliability coefficient of 0.7 or greater is considered acceptable. The Cronbach alpha of 0.908 shows that our instrument is reliable (Mohajan, 2017). This is shown in Table 3.

KMO and Bartlett's Test to scrutinize sampling adequacy see whether the data was fit to use factor analysis in data analysis. Table 4 shows KMO measure of sample adequacy as 0.671 which is close to 1. Furthermore, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity significant value of 0.000 was less than 0.05.

**Table 2. Demographics**

VARIABLES	RESPONSES	PERCENTAGES
Gender	Male	68.6
	Female	31.4
Age	20-29years	23.4
	30-39years	52.0
	40-49years	24.6
Ethnicity	Ga	9.7
	Fante	19.4
	Ewe	29.1
	Ashanti	11.4
	Ga Dangbe	16.6
	Others	13.7
Level of Education	Bachelor's Degree	37.7
	Master's Degree	53.1
	Doctorial	9.1
Institution	Data Link Institute	25.3
	Fountainhead University	22
	Central University	38.7
	Methodist University College	14
Work Experience	2-5years	19.4
	6-10years	39.4
	10-15years	25.7
	More than 15years	15.4

Source: Field Work (2019)

### 4.3 Relationship between Workplace Diversity and Employee Performance

$H_1$  there is a significant relationship between workplace diversity and employee performance

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted on workplace diversity and employee performance in order to establish the relationship among the variables. The correlation shows that there is strong positive relationship between workplace diversity and employee performance at the 1% level of significance (Table 5). Therefore, an increase in workplace diversity would lead to an increase in

**Table 3. Reliability statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
.908	39

Source: Field Work (2019)

**Table 4. KMO and Bartlett's Test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.671
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	599.086
	df	10
	Sig.	.000

Source: Field Work (2019)

employee performance and a decrease in workplace diversity would lead to a decrease in employee performance and its p-value (0.000) which is lesser than the level of significance (0.01) shows that the relationship is statistically significant.

#### 4.4 Relationship between Various form of Workplace Diversity and Employee Performance

Table 6 shows the relationship between various forms of workplace diversity and employee performance. It was observed that there was a moderate positive relationship between gender diversity and employee performance. Thus, an increase in gender diversity will increase employee performance and a decrease in gender diversity will decrease employee performance. Also, the relationship is statistically significant as its p-value (0.000) is lesser than the level of significance (0.01) which was consistent with Alghazo and Al Shaiban (2016) and Akpakip (2017) findings.

There was a moderate positive relationship between age diversity and employee performance. This means that an increase in age diversity will increase employee performance and a decrease in age diversity will decrease employee performance. Also, the relationship is statistically significant as its p-value (0.000) is lesser than the level of significance (0.01) which was in contrast with Selvaraj (2015).

There was a strong positive relationship between ethnicity diversity and employee performance. Thus, an increase in ethnicity diversity will increase employee performance and a decrease in ethnicity diversity will decrease employee performance. However, the relationship is statistically significant as its p-value (0.000) is lesser than the level of significance (0.01).

Finally, there a strong positive relationship between educational diversity and employee performance. Thus, an increase in educational diversity will increase employee performance and a decrease in educational diversity will decrease employee performance. Also, the relationship is statistically significant as its p-value (0.000) is lesser than the level of significance (0.05) which was consistent with Akpakip (2017) findings.

Table 7 generated the specific regression equation as

**Table 5. Correlations**

		Employee Performance	Workplace Diversity
Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.897**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	175	175
Workplace Diversity	Pearson Correlation	.897**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	175	175

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

Source: Field Work (2019)

**Table 6. Correlations**

		Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Educational	Employee Performance
Gender	Pearson Correlation	1	.399**	.473**	.668**	.567**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	175	175	175	175	175
Age	Pearson Correlation	.399**	1	.386**	.378**	.509**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	175	175	175	175	175
Ethnicity	Pearson Correlation	.473**	.386**	1	.866**	.653**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	175	175	175	175	175
Educational	Pearson Correlation	.668**	.378**	.866**	1	.796**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	175	175	175	175	175
Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	.567**	.509**	.653**	.796**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	175	175	175	175	175

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

Source: Field Work (2019)

$$EP = -0.050GEN + 0.267AG - 0.231ETH + 0.928EDU$$

The regression coefficient for gender diversity of employee performance ( $B_1$ ) = 0.050 implies that 1% increase in gender diversity will decrease employee performance by 5% holding AG, ETH and EDU constant and its P value of 0.417 which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance shows that there is not enough statistical proof that an increase in gender diversity will decrease employee performance and vice versa, thus the null hypothesis has to be accepted. This findings was in line with YISRAK (2017) and Kerga and Asefa (2018) research and in contrast with Chew et al. (2011), Eshegbe and Dastane (2015), Zhuwao (2017) and Akpakip (2017) findings.

The regression coefficient for age diversity ( $B_2$ ) = 0.267 implies that 1% increase in age diversity will increase employee performance by 26.7% holding GEN, ETH and EDU constant and its P value of 0.000 which is lesser than the 0.05 level of significance shows that there is enough statistical proof that an increase in age diversity will increase employee performance and vice versa, thus the null hypothesis was rejected. This was in harmony with (Alghazo & Al Shaiban) and contradictory to Chew et al. (2011), Eshegbe and Dastane (2015), Zhuwao (2017) and Kerga and Asefa (2018) findings.

The regression coefficient for ethnicity diversity ( $B_3$ ) = 0.231 implies that 1% increase in ethnicity diversity will decrease employee performance by 23.1% holding GEN, AG and EDU constant and its P value of 0.011 which is lesser than the 0.05 level of significance shows that there is enough statistical proof that an increase in ethnicity diversity will decrease employee performance and vice versa, thus the null hypothesis was rejected. This was comply with (Maingi & Makori, 2015) and Kerga and Asefa (2018) results

The regression coefficient for educational diversity ( $B_4$ ) = 0.928 implies that 1% increase in educational diversity will increase employee performance by 92.8% holding GEN, AG and ETH constant and its P value of 0.000 which is lesser than the 0.05 level of significance shows that there is



**Table 7. Regression Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	2.504	2.785		.899	.370		
	Gender	-.067	.083	-.050	-.814	.417	.475	2.106
	Age	.991	.177	.267	5.599	.000	.786	1.273
	Ethnicity	-.357	.139	-.231	-2.564	.011	.220	4.539
	Educational	1.161	.131	.928	8.852	.000	.163	6.144

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance  
Source: Field Work (2019)

enough statistical proof that an increase in educational diversity will increase employee performance and vice versa, thus the null hypothesis was rejected. The omission of the constant value in the regression equation shows that employee performance cannot be achieved in the study without the influence of the independent variables. Chew et al. (2011), Maingi and Makori (2015) and (Akpakip, 2017) had similar findings whilst Eshegbe and Dastane (2015), Alghazo and Al Shaiban and Kerga and Asefa (2018) findings were in contrast.

Finally, the tolerance value of less than 0.20 or 0.10 indicates a multicollinearity problem. In Table 7 the tolerance values of all independent variables (0.475, 0.786 and 0.220) except educational diversity (0.163) is greater than 0.20 tolerance value which shows that the tolerance level is moderate and good and there is no problem of multicollinearity. The reciprocal of the tolerance is known as the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The VIF of 5 or 10 and above indicates a multicollinearity problem. The VIF values of independent variables also shows that there is no problem of multicollinearity as all values except the educational diversity are less than 5, thus independent variables have no influence on each other and will not influence the outcome of employee performance in the study.

## 4.5 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of workplace diversity on employee performance. The impact of workplace diversity was measured in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and educational background. The results of the study are discussed below:

From the results, majority of the respondents were males. This was in contrast with Zhuwao (2017) and Kossek, Lobel, and Brown (2006) findings.

With regards to ethnicity, there were various ethnicities in the Universities though the Ewes are majority. One can resolve that the workforce is ethnically diverse at the higher education institution. The institutions has an aged diverse workforce which was consistent with Kunze, Boehm, and Bruch (2011) findings who claimed that age diversity has become an unavoidable feature of many organisations.

For educational qualification, Bachelor's degree holders were the least of all. A study conducted by Hoff (2014) found that organisations usually reject hiring people with insufficient educational qualifications, for example primary and secondary qualifications. Gender diversity had a negative and insignificant relationship. Age had a positive and significant relationship with employee performance whereas, Kyalo and Gachunga (2015) had a weak negative and insignificant relationship between age diversity and employee performance.

Ethnicity had a significant effect on employee performance which can be supported by Opstal (2009) ethnic diversity can have both advantages and disadvantages for the organisation.

Educational diversity had a significant and positive relationship with employee performance.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

A diverse workforce is an indication of a changing world and marketplace. Based on the overall result, workplace diversity has an influence on employee performance, however, educational diversity has more effect on employee performance in the Universities compared to other variables. Age and educational diversity had a significant impact on employee performance in the Universities whilst gender and ethnicity diversity had no influence on their performance.

The study recommends higher educational institutions to make use of common languages such as English to cater for all different ethnic groups as this circumvents communication difficulties and ethnic related conflicts.

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