

Cultural Diversity and Employee Engagement: A Study of Telecommunications Companies in Abuja, Nigeria.

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Abstract

The 21st century work environment attracts professionals and workers from within and outside the country, each bringing their unique perspectives. However, despite the diversity in the workforce, there seems to be a lack of understanding on how to utilize these diversities in order to gain optimal results in the form of employee engagement. Employees from the different cultural backgrounds experience continuous conflicts, communication gaps, reduced creativity levels, inability to serve diverse customers, disengagement, and lower productivity all due to conflicting work styles. The purpose of the study is to therefore, examine the effect of cultural diversity on employee engagement in IHS Telecommunications Company Abuja, Nigeria. The study adopts the descriptive research design with a sample size of 154 employees out of a population of 250. Quantitative data was collected with the use of questionnaires containing open ended questions on a 4-Likert scale rating. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to test hypotheses and determine the type and strength of relationship. The results show a positive, significant, moderately strong correlation of 0.571 and a coefficient (R^2), of determination of 0.326, indicating cultural diversity alone explains 32.6% change in the engagement levels of employees. It recommends strategies like cultural representation, diversity training, diversity structure and awareness to be included in organizations as this would promote engagement of employees from diverse backgrounds and settings in the workplace.

Key words: cultural diversity, employee engagement,

INTRODUCTION

In today's modern world of work, globalization is increasingly bringing people together from different ethnic, cultural and national backgrounds. Culture determines the behavior, attitudes, beliefs, ideas, and expectations of employees (Abdulfattah *et al* 2024). The extent to which an employee will get involved in his or her functions, seems to be dependent on how culturally diverse the team members are. This calls for the inclusion of cultural dimension as a major indicator of employee engagement in the work. Cultural diversity can drive motivation, innovation, creativity, interest and job satisfaction and it plays a major role in the success of a firm (Jacob *et al*, 2020). A culturally diverse work environment can attract investors and create a positive image of the organization to the external environment.

Employees are motivated when they meet and work with people from diverse cultural settings. They generate better ideas, take quality decisions and ensure efficiency and effectiveness of the use of organizational resources (Canopy 2018). The level of employee participation and engagement in the workplace is determined by several factors; social, environmental, organizational climate and cultural diversity is one of them. Employee engagement is strongly associated with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, work engagement, and feelings of empowerment and as a result, employees are willing to work harder and align themselves to the company's values and goals (Hapsari *et al* 2019).

The IHS Telecommunications is a workplace that comprises employees from diverse cultures and ethnicities based on its location and the services provided. The organization attracts

professionals and workers from all over the country, each bringing their unique perspectives. However, despite the diversity in the workforce, there seems to be a lack of understanding on how to take advantage of these diversities in order to gain optimal results in the form of employee engagement. Employees from the different cultural backgrounds experience continuous conflicts, communication gaps, reduced creativity levels, inability to serve diverse customers, disengagement, lower productivity all due to conflicting work styles. This further creates problems for the management as this affects the quality of service provided to customers, overall operational efficiency and profitability of the organization. With the several positive impacts of cultural diversity on organizations, there seems to be little empirical evidence on its effects on employee engagement in the telecommunication industry.

The employees work in a high-pressured environment where collaboration, interaction and commitment of the employees is highly needed for overall efficiency and effectiveness of the organization. However, it seems to be unclear how cultural differences may contribute to the engagement levels of employees. This calls for the need to address these gaps by examining the effect of cultural diversity on employee engagement at the IHS Telecommunications company Abuja, to explore how differences in cultural background, values and beliefs may influence employee motivation, commitment, and overall job satisfaction of employees. The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between cultural diversity and employee engagement in the telecommunication company in Nigeria.

Hypothesis

Based on theoretical and the empirical evidences

H₀: There is no significant relationship between cultural diversity and employee engagement.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural diversity refers to the coexistence of different people from diverse cultures, race, tribe, language, religion, values, beliefs, abilities, experiences, and knowledge in different work groups in an organization

(Banks, 2008; Mohammed & Daniel, 2024). It further deals with the ways identity politics are addressed, to ensure inclusion, participation and equity in all teams where diversity exists. Cultural diversity exists where people from different races, backgrounds, settings, tribes, social class, gender, language, cultures, ethnicities, experiences, and nationality, work together in the same organization. The emphasis is on recognizing these differences and maximizing them to foster a more inclusive work environment.

Morris (2023) defines cultural diversity as the integration and collaboration of individuals from varied cultural settings in a team. A clear insight into these diversities is crucial for the effective management of the team for optimal performance. It emphasizes an inclusive work environment, creativity, innovativeness, and employee satisfaction. The role of management is to strategically leverage diversity to promote inclusivity, tolerance, acceptance and respect for the varied teams' members.

Cultural diversity, also referred to as multiculturalism (Attama *et al*, 2022; Daniel & Ubi, 2023), exists where a group of diverse individuals with distinct traditions, languages and views, from multiple cultural groups, within a society, coexist in the workplace. These differences present both opportunities and challenges for the management.

Cultural diversity is described as a complex mix of diverse cultural identities within an organization (Edewor & Folarin, 2014). This complexity is shaped by varied nationality, ethnicity, language and value systems. The integration of these individual variations presents prospects for the organization's success.

Similarly, cultural diversity is the representation of varieties in cultural, ethnic and social backgrounds in any organization. (Oseni, 2023; Daniel & Ubi, 2023).

Cultural diversity is the presence of employees in the workplace from different cultural, social, and educational settings and backgrounds. The recognition of these differences is vital for team effectiveness, efficiency and improved productivity.

Employee Engagement

The concept of employee engagement is relatively a modern concept in human resources which evolved in response to the increasing awareness of the psychological needs of employees in achieving set objectives. It refers to the level of interest, commitment, motivation, and satisfaction an employee displays towards his/her work. It is expressed by enthusiasm, dedication, and work aptitude.

It refers to the way an employee integrates with teams and carries out the duties assigned to him/her (Khan 1990). It is the extent to which individuals personally participate in roles assigned to him or her without being coerced nor forced (self-motivation) but freely interact and communicate with team members in the performance of duties. Khan opines that the factors responsible for the engagement or disengagement of employees is purely psychological.

Employee engagement describes the attitude and behaviors of the employee at work. It can be expressed as passion, focus, efforts, involvement, commitment, energy and enthusiasm by the employee towards work (William & Benjamin 2008; Daniel & Ubi, 2023). An engaged employee is happy with his/her job and is less likely to leave for other opportunities. A disengaged employee on the other hand, displays dissatisfaction towards his/her job and readily leaves for other options at the slightest opportunity.

Employee engagement is the degree to which employees get involved with enthusiasm to their work (Gallup 2006). This can be determined by the amount of time they work, the dedication to team work, and the output from these activities. Employee engagement can simply be described as team engagement. Team engagement results in positive outcomes.

An employee that is engaged looks out for the attainment of the goals of the organization. He/she maintains a positive attitude towards work and the goals of the organization (Robinson 2004; Mohammed & Daniel, 2024). A positive attitude is a driver to positive outcomes which consequently yields returns both for the employee and organization.

The value employees place on their jobs is a reflection of their engagement levels. This is depicted by excitement, happiness and love for work. (DDI, 2005). Value for work is not only a reflection on pay levels but engagement levels.

Theoretical Framework

The Cultural Intelligence theory (CQ) best explains the relationship between cultural diversity and employee engagement. The theory gives insights into the abilities and skills an employee can use to understand cultural differences of colleagues at work to promote inclusivity, engagement, commitment and job satisfaction.

Cultural intelligence theory was propounded by Earley and Ang in 2003. It is defined as the ability to adapt to different cultural settings and yet be effective and efficient. It is referred to as a set of capabilities which a person possesses that enables him or her to function effectively and efficiently. People who possess a high level of cultural intelligence (CQ) are able to identify and manage behavioral patterns in a group. These sets of capabilities according to Earley and Soon (2003) are categorized into four namely; cognitive, motivational, metacognitive and behavioral.

Empirical Review

Laar (2022) conducted a study on the impact of cultural diversity on overall organizational performance in Ghana. Cultural diversity was measured in terms of language, religion and value system while it used team building, communication and productivity as proxies of organizational performance. The study used primary data with a population of 353 employees. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data. It was found that team building, communication and employee productivity were highly related to cultural diversity. Laar's work is related to the study but it focused on organizational performance as a whole, however, this study seeks to narrow the dependent variable to employee engagement only. It is believed that engagement employees would definitely increase performance of the organization.

A study was done on the effect of workplace diversity management on employee

commitment in the Nigerian Public Sector: A conceptual review by Uchechi et al (2023). The objective was to examine the impact of workplace diversity management on employee commitment. The study adopted the literature review methodology. The study revealed poor implementation of workplace diversity management policies in Nigeria which was reflected in the type of appointments, promotions and nominations. It recommends the integration of diversity management policies in the regulatory agencies in Nigeria. Uchechi's work aligns with the current study but its methodology is limited to literature review. This work adopts the quantitative research methodology where data was collected and analyzed to gain empirical insights into the study.

A related study was carried out by Morris (2023) on cultural diversity in the workplace and the role of management, with the objective of investigating the role of management in handling cultural diversity in the workplace. The study adopts the qualitative methodology where literature between 2019 to 2022 was reviewed. It was revealed that cultural diversity has a positive impact on business performance and it recommends the promotion of cultural diversity in the workplace. While Morris work relates to this study, its methodology is limited to qualitative design. This study uses quantitative research design.

Abdallah et al (2024) studied the impact of diversity management on innovative work behavior in the United Arab Emirates. The study adopts the survey method with a sample size of 120. It was found that diversity management significantly impacts employee engagement. Abdallah's work was focused in the United Arab Emirates, this current study seeks to fill the geographical gap by conducting a similar study in Nigeria.

Adebowale et al (2025) examined the impact of cultural diversity on team performance and corporate social responsibility outcomes in Nigerian multinational companies. It adopted the descriptive survey design with a sample of 200 respondents through stratified random sampling technique. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The results show that cultural diversity, if properly, is a driver of innovation and employee satisfaction. The methodology

and data analysis technique aligns with the current study, however, Adebowale's work was conducted in Nigerian Multinational Companies (MNCs), this study is focused on telecommunications companies in Nigeria.

Similarly, Aman et al (2024) conducted a study on the impact of cultural diversity on employee performance, a case study of expatriates in the United Arab Emirates. Qualitative data was used with a sample of five respondents from different nationalities in a private organization. The results revealed that three proxies of cultural diversity have a negative relationship with job satisfaction of the expatriates while two other proxies positively impacted job performance. While Aman et al's concentration on private organization relates with the current study scope, The sample size of their study is limited. This study seeks to use a sample size of 120 to examine the effect of cultural diversity on employee engagement.

Afolabi and Kayas (2024) examined the influence of cultural diversity on performance of academic institutions with Liverpool John Moores University as a case study. The research adopted quantitative design with a sample size of 70 employees. It was discovered that cultural diversity positively impacts performance. It recommends management to be committed to fostering an inclusion work environment. This study aligns because it focuses on the service sector, however limited to academic institutions. This study looks at the telecommunications industry.

A related work was done by Abokigbo (2022) on the relationship between corporate organizational culture and employee engagement in southern eastern Nigerian firms. It sampled 500 staff out of 5000 population for the study. The data was analyzed using simple percentages and Pearson correlation. The results revealed that corporate organizational culture relates to employee engagement. It recommends promotion of diversity policies by managers that enhance collaboration. The study focused on corporate organizational culture. However, differences in culture of the workers is a determinant factor of the corporate culture.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey design was used to examine the empirical relationship between cultural diversity and employee engagement in

organizations. This design enables the researcher to objectively and quantitatively measure and analyze the extent to which cultural diversity impacts employee engagement. The population of study comprises 250 staff of IHS Towers, a Telecommunications infrastructure provider located in Wuse II Abuja, Nigeria. The sample size was 154. Primary data was collected through the Data was collected electronically with the use of Google form questionnaires designed on a four Likert scale point with Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) and a corresponding nominal values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. Content Validity was used to test the suitability of the instrument while reliability was obtained using test-retest technique. The same questionnaire was administered to the same group of respondents at another time and the results obtained were the same. The two

main variables for the study are cultural diversity and employee engagement. Cultural diversity is the independent variable while employee engagement is the dependent variable. Inferential statistics was used to assess the relationship between cultural diversity and employee engagement.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 154 questionnaires were distributed but only 110 (71.4%) were filled correctly and returned which were used for the analysis. 28.6% of the respondents did not fill the questionnaire. 74.5% were male while 25.4% were female with an age range of 20-40 above. The religion of respondents were; Christianity (95, 86.3%), Islam (14, 12.7%) and others (1, 0.9%). The work experience respondents range from less than 1year to over 6years. Other results are as presented below:

Table 1 Model Summary – Regression Statistics

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	0.571 ^a	0.326	0.319	2.911
a. Predictors: (Constant), Cultural Diversity				

(Source: Author's computation, SPSS Version 29)

Table 2 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Model	Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	442.039	1	442.039	52.157	0.00 ^b
Residual	915.316	108	8.475		
Total	1357.355	109			
a. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement b. Predictors: (Constant), Cultural Diversity					

(Source: Author's computation SPSS version 29)

Table 3 Coefficients^b

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.938	0.919		3.197	.002
	Cultural Diversity	0.640	0.089	0.571	7.222	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement						

(Source: Author's computation SPSS version 29)

Discussions

Table 1 above presents the model summary of the regression analysis conducted to examine the effect of cultural diversity on the engagement of employees of IHS Telecommunications Company Abuja. The result shows correlation of 0.571 which reflects a **positive and moderately strong** relationship between cultural diversity (independent variable) and employee engagement (dependent variable). The co-efficient of determination (R^2) is 0.326 which indicates that 32.6% of the changes in the dependent variable – employee engagement, can be explained by the independent variable – cultural diversity. This means cultural diversity alone explains 32.6% engagement levels of employees of IHS Telecommunications company, Abuja.

Table 2 uses ANOVA to further test the significance of the results at 0.000 which is less than 5%, $0.005(p < 0.05)$ and with the higher F-statistic of 52.157, the result is statistically significant.

Table 4.2.3 shows a t-score of 7.222 ($t=7.222$) indicating an exceptionally strong significance. It is far greater than the threshold at a significance level of 0.002, meaning the

estimated effect on the dependent variable – employee engagement is seven times its standard error.

Test Of Hypothesis

From the above analysis, we, therefore, reject the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between cultural diversity and the engagement levels of employees of IHS Telecommunications company, and accept the alternate hypothesis, that there is a significant relationship between cultural diversity and employee engagement of IHS Telecommunications Company.

Implications Of The Findings: The results of the study revealed that cultural diversity impacts the engagement levels of employees in the workplace. The results in Table 4.2.1 shows a correlation of 0.571 and a coefficient of determination of 0.326, indicating cultural diversity alone explains 32.6% change in the engagement levels of employees of IHS Telecommunications company, Abuja if other variables remain constant.

This shows a positive, statistically significant, and moderately strong relationship between cultural diversity and the extent to which

employees get involved in the workplace. The implication of this is that cultural diversity is not just a mere ethical item, it is a major determinant of the commitment, dedication and connectedness of employees in an organization. When different people from diverse cultures, races, tribes, language, religion, values, beliefs, abilities, experiences, and knowledge are genuinely accepted and valued, they tend to feel more valued in the organization and this drives high engagement. This agrees with the findings of Abdallah et al (2024) that proper diversity management prompts innovative behaviors of employees.

Also, the moderate relationship discovered between cultural diversity and employee engagement in this study is a pointer that there are other factors that account for employee engagement. Organizations should explore and imbibe these factors as employee engagement plans and not wholly depend on cultural diversity management policies alone. This result aligns with Abokigbo (2022) who found that corporate organizational culture contributes to the level of engagement of employees in organizations.

The findings imply that diversity equals engagement. It therefore behooves on managers to deliberately take advantage of diversity and 'reap its fruits' in terms of collaboration, teamwork, innovativeness, creativity, enthusiasm, job satisfaction, passion and increased output. The findings of Adebowale et al (2025) aligns with this where it was found that cultural diversity, if properly managed, drives innovation and employee satisfaction. This means that cultural diversity if properly utilized does not lead to disengagement of employees in organizations as erroneously perceived. The findings of this study debunk the erroneous belief.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Achieving optimal outputs from employees is a topmost priority of organizations. Most organizations are constantly researching on how best to tap the potentials of their employees and harness them for maximum outcomes. A continuous pool of employees from different cultural backgrounds and settings with diversity in experiences, knowledge, abilities, values, capabilities,

interests, skills, and perspectives as workers in an organization, play a significant role on employee engagement which is the crux of this study. The findings of this study underscore the above assertion.

It can therefore be concluded that cultural diversity enhances the engagement of employees as was revealed in the case study; IHS Telecommunications Company, Abuja.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby advanced:

1. A cultural diversity structure should be integrated into IHS Telecommunications Company and other organizations, that is deliberately targeted at fostering cultural diversity and inclusion of employees translating into engagement – job satisfaction, feeling of acceptance, value and respect for their differences.
2. The HRs of Service and non-service organizations should strategically recruit employees from different works of life to enhance diversity representation, heightened engagement and improved performance
3. Continuous training programs on diversity and inclusion are done on a periodic basis, by management to create and inculcate cultural diversity awareness.

Recommendations for further Studies

The study examined the effect of cultural diversity on employee engagement. It only looked at cultural diversity as a predictor of engagement levels of employees. Further studies can focus on other independent variables such as; leadership styles, Management By Objectives(MBO), and organizational climate.

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