



WORKFORCE DIVERSITY AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN TELECOMMUNICATION COMPANIES IN NIGERIA: CAN SELF EFFICACY ACCENTUATE THE RELATIONSHIP?

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Abstract

This study examines the complex interplay of workplace diversity, self-efficacy, and employee performance at telecommunications firms located in Zaria. The research adopts a cross-sectional approach. The research especially examines the characteristics of workplace diversity, including age, ethnic, and gender diversity. The study used a census sample technique, which includes a total of 59 workers. The results demonstrate strong and meaningful correlations between workplace diversity characteristics, such as age, ethnicity, and gender, and employee performance. Age diversity, ethnic diversity, and gender diversity have a good impact on staff performance in the telecommunications company. However, the research delves further into these direct connections by examining the moderating influence of self-efficacy on these interactions. The findings indicate that self-efficacy significantly influences the relationship between workplace diversity and employee performance. Individuals that possess greater degrees of self-efficacy are more inclined to use the beneficial impacts of diversity, hence converting it into improved performance results. This implies that fostering self-confidence and belief in one's abilities among workers might enhance the advantages gained from a varied working setting. The practical consequences for management are acknowledging the complex nature of diversity and promoting self-confidence among personnel. Organizations may cultivate a more inclusive and productive work environment in the telecommunications sector by comprehending and actively advocating for self-efficacy, which allows them to leverage the beneficial impact of workplace diversity on employee performance.

Keywords: Age diversity, Employee performance, Ethnic diversity, Gender diversity, Workforce diversity



INTRODUCTION

The human resource is a crucial asset for every firm, and thus, ensuring a diverse workforce is a top priority for most companies. businesses now find it vital to have a diverse workforce. However, managing the potential disruptions that occur with increased diversity is a challenge for these businesses (Saxena, 2014). Organizations have acknowledged that their diverse workforce plays a crucial role in leveraging financial resources to accomplish organizational objectives.

Globalization has led to an increase in workforce diversity, which refers to the presence of many characteristics among workers. This has become a significant topic of interest for organizational academics and managers. In order to attract a broader range of skilled individuals, organizations must embrace a culture that values and promotes workforce diversity. Implementing this strategy will enhance the company's standing and strengthen its cultural principles (Antwi et al., 2023). Workforce diversity is considered a crucial aspect of ensuring justice and fairness in the workplace. Many firms see it as a fundamental strategic objective that they are obligated to promote (Mor Barak, 2015).

Efforts to promote diversity within organizations have been recommended to cultivate good attitudes in corporate settings, attract highly skilled employees, and foster the generation of new ideas (Mor Barak et al., 2016). Every business has a certain *raison d'être*, which may include providing services or manufacturing and distributing things. Regardless of the level of technical advancement inside a business, the presence of one or two individuals to oversee and ensure the effectiveness of its performance is essential, hence making workers indispensable in all types of organizations. According to Wambui et al., (2013), human capital is a crucial aspect for organizations as it serves as the driving force behind their operations.

Globalization enables individuals from diverse backgrounds, educational levels, geographical areas, cultures, languages, and beliefs to collaborate inside a same company in a structured way. The use of workforce diversity management has effectively enhanced and sustained employee performance inside the firm. The exchange of diverse information, beliefs, and skills among workers enhances their productivity and improves the quality of their work (Ng et al., 2023). Individuals exhibit differentiation in two distinct ways. Firstly, main level diversity includes variations in age, gender, physical and mental capabilities, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation among individuals.

Furthermore, variations in identification include disparities in education, wealth, religion, job experience, personality, social standing, and lifestyle. Diversity encompasses a wide range of discernible and imperceptible characteristics among individuals, including but not limited to race, religion, social and marital status, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and handicap (Hoang et al., 2022). Diversity encompasses the many aspects that distinguish individuals based on apparent

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characteristics such as age, gender, cultural heritage, ethnic origin, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, political affiliations, and disabilities. This study however, intends to examine the impact of workforce diversity, self-efficacy on the performance of employees in selected telecommunication firms in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee performance is determined by the level of effort and behavior they demonstrate in fulfilling their given responsibilities and obligations within a certain time frame (Kloutsiniotis and Mihail, 2020). Executing tasks that align with organizational standards is an indicator of workers' high performance. Executing tasks that align with the company's requirements is an indicator of personnel with commendable performance (Nabella & Rivaldo, 2023). Employee performance is the extent to which an individual employee's productivity level aligns with the performance criteria set by the company (Mohammad, 2020). Performance refers to the actions performed by workers when they carry out their daily activities in accordance with predetermined standards and evaluations (Tirtayasa, 2019).

Workforce diversity refers to the varying attitudes and variances among workers in the workplace, including factors such as language, religion, color, health condition, and gender (Barnes & Grayer, 2023). Workforce diversity refers to the variations among individuals in the workplace with regards to age, ethnicity, education, socioeconomic background, sexual orientation, and religion (Kroll & Schubert, 2023). Workforce diversity and diversity management are closely interconnected. Diversity management focuses on fostering an inclusive work environment that promotes equity and provides equal opportunity for individuals with diverse needs, traits, and perspectives to collaborate, express themselves freely, and effectively use their abilities in a conscious manner within a varied workplace setting (Campbell, 2023).

Diversity management primarily establishes a favorable atmosphere and thereafter ensures the efficient maintenance of this atmosphere, wherein all workers are esteemed and people may make optimal contributions towards the attainment of organizational objectives. The focus is on the organizational culture and institutional environment that aligns the expectations, needs, and incentives of a diverse workforce within the organizational context (Kamran & Javaid, 2023). A workforce comprised of individuals from a certain age cohort runs the risk of becoming outdated if the valuable expertise acquired by the older generation is not effectively transmitted to younger experts.

A diverse workforce including individuals from various age groups fosters an environment where each generation contributes a wide range of expertise and abilities (Finn, 2015). An inadequately supervised workforce with a wide range of age groups leads to uninteresting and unstimulating ideas, cautious approaches to tactics, and resistance to change (Hamisu et al., 2021; Isichei et al., 2023). Research conducted by Hapomwe (2020), Ihemeje et al. (2023), Odhiambo et al., (2018),

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and Barang'a and Maende (2019) has shown a clear and meaningful correlation between age diversity and employee performance. In contrast, Shakeel and Fazal (2019) discovered a detrimental correlation between age diversity and employee performance, whereas Bhebhe and Murindi (2020) identified a nonsignificant association between age diversity and employee performance.

H₀₁: Age diversity has no significant effect on employee performance of telecommunication firms in Nigeria.

The acceptance of ethnic diversity has been significantly influenced by globalization and the implementation of workforce diversity programs, such as affirmative action measures. Due to its advantageous qualities, ethnic diversity has become a catalyst for economic growth in the global commercial sector. Dastane and Eshegbe (2015) argue that organizations with a high degree of ethnic diversity are more likely to exhibit creativity and innovation. Marx, Pons, and Suri (2016) emphasized that in order for organizations to get advantages from ethnic diversity, managers must possess the expertise and abilities to effectively handle diversity, since it may also lead to negative consequences if not well handled.

According to the social identity and self-categorization hypothesis, having an ethnically varied workforce may lead to psychological processes such as preference for one's own group, attraction to one's own group, and, in the worst case, favoritism towards one's own group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The outcome of this may lead to a modification in workers' behavior, resulting in group members exhibiting a preference for individuals from their own ethnic background. This may lead to adverse consequences, such as ineffective communication, less collaboration, and diminished unity (Ekot, 2017). Moreover, this may result in increased disputes, a stronger desire to leave the work, and reduced levels of satisfaction and performance (Oerlemans, Peeters, & Schaufeli, 2001).

Several investigations, including Ihemeje et al. (2023), Barang'a and Maende (2019), Zhuwao et al., (2019), and Anam and Attih (2021), have been conducted. In contrast, Shakeel and Fazal have shown a negative correlation between ethnic diversity and employee performance. In a study conducted by Graen (2003), it was found that ethnic diversity within a team was a strong indicator of team performance. The study concluded that teams with a greater diversity of ethnic backgrounds had an advantage in problem-solving, leading to improved team performance. This advantage was observed after the teams had learned how to effectively utilize these differences to gain a competitive edge. This study therefore hypothesised that:

H₀₂: Ethnic diversity has no significant effect on employee performance of telecommunication firms in Nigeria

Gender diversity encompasses gender identities that transcend traditional norms of expression. Gender diversity is the representation of individuals from different genders in a just and equal way. Typically, it pertains to an equitable representation of both males and females, however it may also

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include those who identify as non-binary (Ihemeje et al., 2023). A multitude of research (Ihemeje et al, 2023; Amsi & Kiflemariam, 2023; Chepkemoui et al., 2022; Hapomwe, 2020; Krishnan, 2020; Barang'a & Maende, 2019; Zhuwao et al., 2019) have shown a positive and substantial correlation between gender diversity and employee performance. In contrast, Shakeel and Fazal (2019) discovered a detrimental correlation between gender diversity and employee performance, whereas Bhebhe and Murindi (2020) identified a non-significant association between gender diversity and employee performance. This study hypothesised that:

H₀₃: Gender diversity has no significant effect on employee performance of telecommunication firms in Nigeria

Self-efficacy is a research field within social cognition or social science that is often linked to organizational performance. The notion of self-efficacy, as proposed by Bandura in 1997, refers to an individual's conviction in their capacity to successfully do a certain job or handle a given circumstance. Self-efficacy, as defined by Steinbauer (2018), serves as the foundation for the development of motivation, emotions, and individual accomplishments. It is a crucial factor in self-regulation. This notion aligns with Bandura's (2018) assertion that an individual's motivation, circumstances, and behaviors are often influenced by their own beliefs rather than objective realities.

Individual conduct is often more predictable based on one's self-efficacy beliefs rather than on knowledge and skill. Therefore, it can be inferred that self-efficacy has a significant role in influencing an individual to enhance their strength, create a favorable atmosphere, and inspire other colleagues, finally resulting in improved performance (Nusannas et al., 2020). Self-efficacy, as defined by social cognitive theory, pertains to an individual's confidence in their capacity to successfully complete activities and attain objectives. Self-efficacy, when implemented in the workplace, may have an impact on how people approach their tasks and handle obstacles.

The presence of self-efficacy moderates the relationship between diversity and performance, indicating that individuals' beliefs about their own skills significantly influence the impact of diversity on performance. Individuals with a strong sense of self-efficacy may see diversity as a chance to acquire knowledge and engage in cooperative efforts, resulting in enhanced performance. Conversely, those with weaker self-efficacy may see diversity-related issues as more intimidating, which might have a detrimental effect on their performance. Chen (2020) suggests that persons with strong self-efficacy are more likely to be motivated to act with precision and direction, particularly when they have clear objectives to attain. This factor may ascertain the level of dedication and duration of persistence a person would exhibit when confronted with hurdles or bad experiences.

Nevertheless, self efficacy has been used in several research as a modulator of various organizational outcomes. For example, self efficacy played a role in moderating the relationship

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between moral disengagement and habituation of counterproductive behavior (Paciello et al., 2023), control systems and sales performance (Vieira et al., 2022), ethical leadership, workplace spirituality, and job satisfaction (Aftab et al., 2022), as well as ethical leadership's impact on work engagement and workaholism (Wibawa & Takahashi, 2021). Therefore, this research proposed that firms that acknowledge and foster individuals' self efficacy might create a setting where diversity is seen as an asset rather than an obstacle. This highlights the need of cultivating a nurturing working environment that enables people to have confidence in their capabilities, eventually shaping their reactions to and advantages gained from workforce diversity. Therefore, on the basis, the study hypothesised that:

H04: Self-efficacy does not moderate the relationship between age diversity and employee performance of telecommunication firms in Nigeria

H05: Self-efficacy does not moderate the relationship between ethnic diversity and employee performance of telecommunication firms in Nigeria

H06: Self-efficacy does not moderate the relationship between gender diversity and employee performance of telecommunication firms in Nigeria

Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura (1977) initiated the concept of self-efficacy in his exploration of social learning theory, which was subsequently renamed social cognitive theory in 1989. Self-efficacy is a term under Bandura's social cognitive theory. According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy refers to individuals' beliefs in their ability to exert control over their own actions and the outcomes that impact their life. Alternatively, self-efficacy refers to the confidence one has in their ability to effectively use their motivation, cognitive talents, and take appropriate actions to satisfy certain situational requirements. Bandura (1989) posited that self-efficacy has a significant impact on motivation, well-being, and personal success. The Social Cognitive theory asserts that people acquire knowledge and skills via the process of watching others and emulating their activities. It highlights the mutual influence of cognitive processes, environmental circumstances, and individual actions. This idea posits that individuals are seen as proactive actors in their own growth, with the ability to regulate and reflect upon themselves.

His research findings indicate that self-efficacy significantly influences individuals' cognition, behavior, and motivation in relation to a certain task or activity. He discovered that having a poor sense of self-efficacy results in the experience of stress, despair, anxiety, and a feeling of powerlessness. Their lack of confidence in their abilities negatively impacts their achievement. It also impacts cognitive processes, as shown by the level of decision-making and success, including academic performance. It also impacts individuals' behavior, notably in their decision-making and execution of certain activities. It has an impact on the degree of motivation. Bandura's research indicated that those with a significantly elevated degree of self-efficacy are unlikely to disengage

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from a challenging activity, instead seeing it as an opportunity for growth (Bandura, 1989). According to this idea, self-efficacy influences individuals' goal-setting process and the objectives they strive to achieve. Individuals with elevated self-efficacy are inclined to establish more ambitious objectives in contrast to individuals with diminished self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989). They exhibit resilience in the face of defeat and rather of surrendering, they actively seek strategies for survival (Bandura, 1977).

Applying social cognition theory to interactions within an organizational environment entails comprehending how people acquire and adjust behaviors by means of observation and modeling. Exposure to a variety of role models in the workplace may have an impact on workers' views, attitudes, and actions. For example, within the context of workplace diversity, people who see effective cooperation and problem-solving among diverse teams may adopt good behavioral patterns. Furthermore, the idea posits that people who possess greater self efficacy are more inclined to actively interact with colleagues from varied backgrounds, so fostering a more inclusive and cooperative workplace culture. Organizations may intentionally use social cognitive theory to optimize workplace connections, cultivate a pleasant learning environment, and advance diversity and inclusion.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a cross-sectional survey research approach. The design facilitated the acquisition of data on the current practices and circumstances of workforce diversity and its impact on workers' job performance. Quantitative research, as described by Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill (2012), is characterized by its association with positivism, its use of organized data gathering techniques, and its adoption of deductive research procedures that prioritize the use of data to evaluate theory. The main data were obtained by questionnaire copies and analyzed using the structural equation model (SEM). More precisely, the version of Smart-PLS being referred to is 3.39. Additionally, the research specifically examined how the management of workforce diversity affects the performance of employees at telecommunication companies located in Zaria. The participants consist of the staff from four telecommunication companies located in Zaria. The data collecting period spanned two weeks with the aim of gathering the respondents' perspective. The study respondents were selected from among the workers who have a minimum of two (2) years of work experience, as they have encountered various situational elements in their employment.

Study Population

The research focuses on the workers of the four communications businesses in Zaria as the target demographic. MTN employs 8 individuals, Glo has a workforce of 25 at each of its service centers, Airtel has 11 people, and 9mobile has 6 employees. Therefore, study target population is 59. Determining the appropriate sample size and selecting the most suitable sampling technique. The

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research used a census sample approach to include all 59 workers. Census sampling is a statistical way of studying the whole population. The strategy is mostly used when the population size is limited.

Data Collection Tool

The primary data was collected by distributing structured questionnaires to get the participants' most recent feedback on how age diversity, gender diversity, and ethnic diversity affect employee performance. The study respondents were selected from among the workers that had a minimum of two (2) years of work experience. This criterion ensures that they have encountered various situational conditions in their job that need the implementation of a certain leadership style.

This study used 6 questions to evaluate age diversity, 7 items to measure gender diversity, and 7 items to assess ethnic diversity. These items were derived from the research conducted by Darwin and Palanisamy (2015). The questionnaire item for the dependent variable, employee performance, was derived from a self-rating instrument developed by Welbourne, Johnson, and Erez (1998), consisting of seven questions. To measure self efficacy, the study used 8 items from Schwarzer and Jerusalem's (1995) research and incorporated them into its own study. The participants were asked to express their viewpoint using a rating system ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "Strongly Disagree" (SD), 2 represents "Disagree" (D), 3 represents "Neutral" (N), 4 represents "Agree" (A), and 5 represents "Strongly Agree" (SA). The validity and reliability of this measurement have been confirmed via many investigations, demonstrating an acceptable degree of accuracy and consistency.

DATA ANALYSES AND PRESENTATION

The research used a structural equation model (SEM) to analyze the validity, reliability, and evaluate the hypothesized association between the components. The measurement model of SEM was used to assess the item loadings, reliability, and validity (convergent and divergent validity). The structural model was used to determine how the predictor and mediator factors affect the criterion variable.

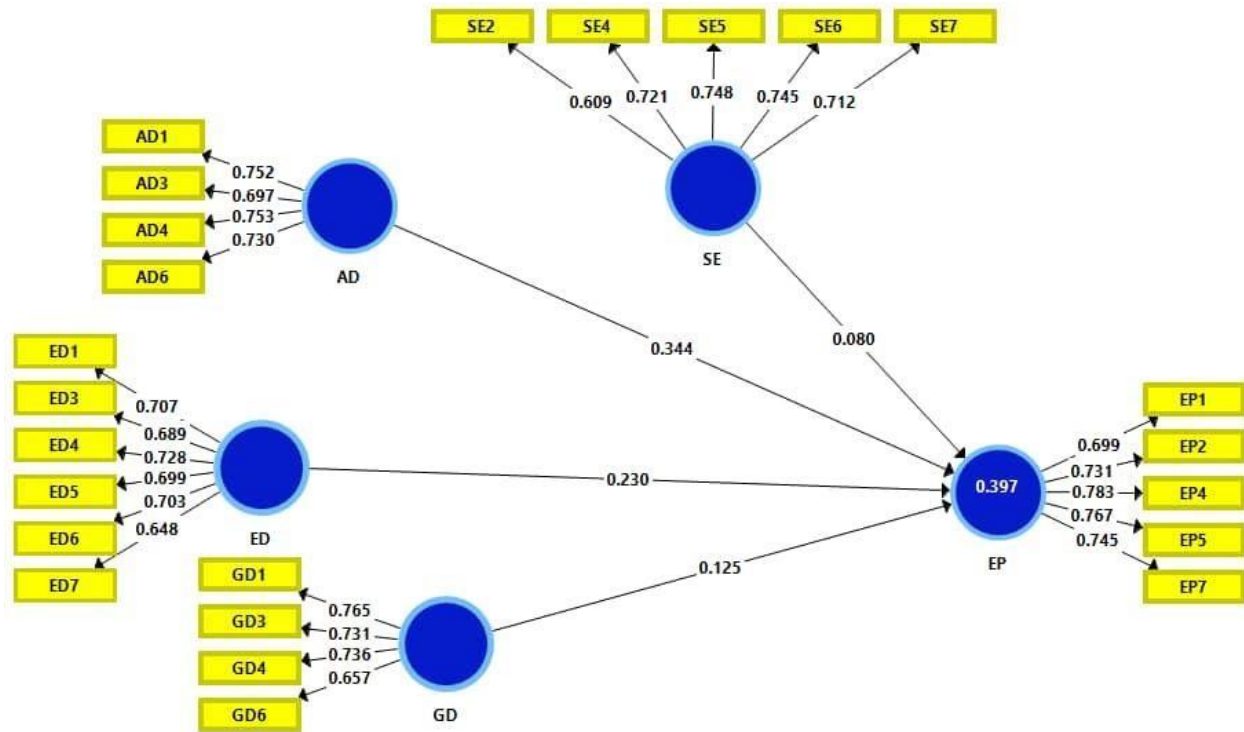


Figure 1: Measurement Model

Initially, the research assessed the item loadings. Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, and Ringle (2018) suggested that only items with a loading of 0.70 or above should be kept and used for further research. Nevertheless, due to the feasibility of having loadings below 0.7, Hulland (1999) recommended maintaining a loading threshold of 0.5 or above, taking into account the impact on convergent validity and reliability. Loadings with a value of 0.5 were kept, whereas loadings below that threshold (such as AD2, AD5, ED2, GD2, GD5, GD7, EP3, EP6, SE1, SE3, and SE8) were removed. See Table 1 and Figure 1 for further details. Furthermore, the research assessed convergent validity by using Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Hair et al., (2021) suggested that a minimum AVE value of 0.5 should be attained in order to demonstrate the construct's convergent validity. The data shown in Table 1 demonstrates that the constructs exhibit convergent validity, since the values of AVE above the 0.5 benchmark. Meanwhile, Hair, Page, and Brunsveld (2020) suggested that a value of 0.7 or above should be used as a threshold to determine whether the construct is both consistent and reliable. The data shown in Table 1 clearly shows that the composite reliability values exceed the criterion of 0.7. Therefore, the constructs are dependable.

Table 1: Item Loadings, Reliability and Convergent Validity

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Composite Reliability	AVE
Age Diversity	AD1	0.752	0.823	0.538
	AD3	0.697		



	AD4	0.753		
	AD6	0.730		
Ethnic Diversity	ED1	0.707	0.849	0.500
	ED3	0.689		
	ED4	0.728		
	ED5	0.699		
	ED6	0.703		
	ED7	0.648		
Employee Performance	EP1	0.699	0.862	0.556
	EP2	0.731		
	EP4	0.783		
	EP5	0.767		
	EP7	0.745		
Gender Diversity	GD1	0.765	0.814	0.523
	GD3	0.731		
	GD4	0.736		
	GD6	0.657		
Self-Efficacy	SE2	0.609	0.834	0.502
	SE4	0.721		
	SE5	0.748		
	SE6	0.745		
	SE7	0.712		

Source: Authors' systemization of SmartPLS output (2023)

Furthermore, this work meticulously investigated the divergent validity, in accordance with the guidelines proposed by Hair et al. (2018) and Kline (2011). The research used the HeterotraitMonotrait correlation ratio, as proposed by Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015), to address the shortcomings of traditional techniques like the Fornell and Larcker Criterion and Cross-loading in identifying discriminant validity problems across components. The research used the criteria suggested by authors like Kline (2011) and Henseler et al. (2015) to assess divergent validity. Kline proposed a strict cutoff of < 0.85 for constructs that have distinct conceptual differences, however Henseler et al. (2015) suggested a more relaxed criterion of < 0.90 for constructs that share comparable concepts. Since the dimensions being studied in this research, namely age diversity, ethnic diversity, and gender diversity, share comparable concepts, a threshold of less than 0.90 was used. Therefore, given the correlations across constructs are lower than 0.90, this analysis verifies the existence of divergent validity in the measurements of the research.

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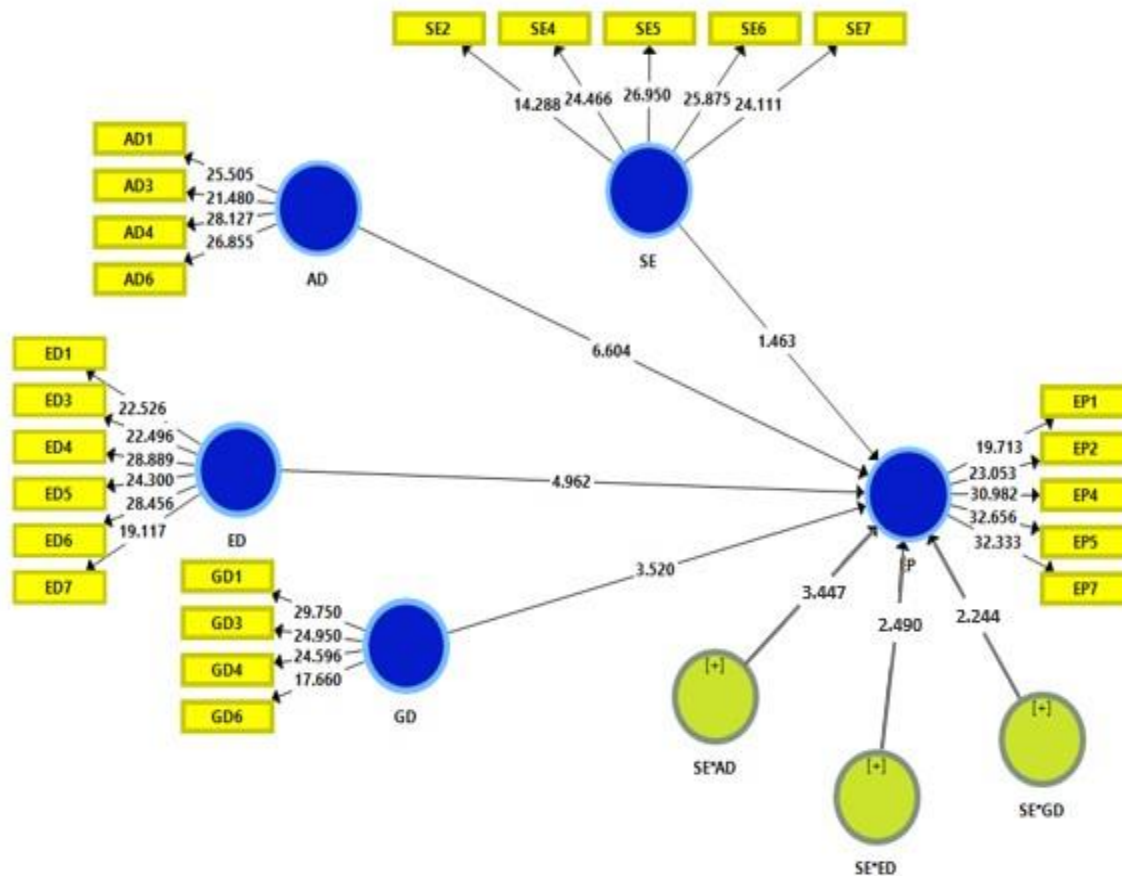
Table 2: Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio of Correlations Discriminant Validity

Constructs	AD	ED	EP	GD	SE
AD					
ED	0.609				
EP	0.713	0.625			
GD	0.631	0.772	0.602		
SE	0.682	0.716	0.567	0.769	

Source: Authors' systemization of SmartPLS output (2023)

Assessment of Structural Model

The section delves into the evaluation of the direct and moderating relationship between the exogeneous and endogenous variables. In addition, coefficient of determination (R^2), the effect size (f^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2) were assessed



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Figure 2: Structural Model (Moderating effect)

Table 3: *Test of Direct and Moderating Hypotheses*

Hypotheses	Relationship	Beta	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Decision
H01	AD->EP	0.298	0.045	6.604	0.000	Rejected
H02	ED->EP	0.211	0.042	4.962	0.000	Rejected
H03	GD->EP	0.170	0.048	3.520	0.000	Rejected
H04	SE*AD->EP	0.131	0.038	3.447	0.001	Rejected
H05	SE*ED >EP	0.127	0.051	2.490	0.013	Rejected
H06	SE*GD->EP	0.101	0.045	2.244	0.025	Rejected

$R^2=0.397$

Source: Authors' systemization of SmartPLS output (2023)

Table 3 and Figure 2 displayed the postulated correlation and the determinations. The research revealed that age adversity has a beneficial and noteworthy impact on employee performance among telecommunication companies in Zaria. The data clearly demonstrates that a 1% rise in age diversity corresponds to a 0.298% boost in employee effectiveness. Therefore, the first theory was rejected. Similarly, the second hypothesis was also rejected. The study revealed that ethnic diversity had a beneficial and substantial impact on employee performance. Increasing the ethnic diversity among workers in the telecommunication outfit by 1% will result in a 0.211% improvement in employee performance. Similarly, the third hypothesis suggests that gender diversity has a large beneficial impact on employee performance. An incremental rise in gender diversity will result in a 0.170% enhancement in employee performance. Therefore, the third hypothesis was also rejected.

The findings of the moderating connection may be seen in Table 3, specifically for hypotheses H04 to H06. The study conducted in H04 demonstrated that self-efficacy had a key role in moderating the link between age diversity and employee performance. Therefore, hypothesis 4 was rejected. Furthermore, self-efficacy had a major role in moderating the connection between ethnic diversity and employee performance. Therefore, the fifth hypothesis was rejected. Finally, self-efficacy had a major role in moderating the association between gender diversity and employee performance. Therefore, the sixth hypothesis was rejected. Furthermore, Table 3 reveals that the beta coefficient for the direct and moderating effects (H01->H06) exhibit a consistent positive direction. Gardner, Harris, Li, Kirkman, and Mathieu (2017) contend that when the beta coefficients exhibit consistent directionality, either positive or negative, the moderator strengthens or accentuates the existing relationship. Consequently, the beta values in this research exhibit a positive correlation, leading to the conclusion that self-efficacy accentuates the connection between diversity characteristics and employee performance.

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Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R^2), which quantifies the proportion of variation in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variable, is 0.397 or 40%. The research does not account for the remaining 60% of the factors. Chin (1998) classified the coefficient of determination value of 40% as moderate.

Effect Size (f^2)

The effect size is often used to measure the specific impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable. Put simply, it elucidates the distinct variation ascribed to each independent variable. Cohen (1988) established specific thresholds of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 to classify effect sizes as small, medium, and large, respectively. The data shown in Table 4 indicates that AD has a moderate influence, whereas ED, GD, SE*AD, SE*ED, and SE*GD have a small effect or contribution in terms of variance to the dependent variable.

Table 4. *Effect Size (f^2)*

Constructs	EP(f^2)	Effect Size
AD	0.161	Medium
ED	0.059	Small
GD	0.049	Small
SE*AD	0.042	Small
SE*ED	0.039	Small
SE*GD	0.286	Small

Source: Authors' systemization of SmartPLS output (2023)

Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

This research also examines the predictive importance of the exogenous factors, assessing their practical value in the actual world, as highlighted by Ojeleye, Ojeleye, Kareem, and Abdullahi (2023). According to the guidelines provided by Hair et al. (2021), the Q^2 value, which ranges from 0 to 1, is crucial for assessing the model's practical significance. A Q^2 score of 0 implies insignificance in practical terms, but a number greater than 0 suggests the model's usefulness in real-world applications. The study findings indicate that the predictive relevance value, specifically for the goal variable of employee performance surpassing 0, is found to be 0.202 as shown in Table 5. Therefore, these results confirm the practical significance of the models used in the research.

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Table 5: *Assessment Predictive Relevance*

Constructs	SSO	SSE	$Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)$
EP	3,245.000	2,588.760	0.202

Source: Authors' systemization of SmartPLS output (2023) **Discussions**

The presence of a wide range of ages inside telecommunications companies may significantly enhance the performance of employees. This aligns with prior research findings of Hapomwe, 2020; Ihemeje et al, 2023; Odhiambo, Gachoka and Rambo, 2018; and Barang'a & Maende, 2019. A workforce that encompasses a wide diversity of ages facilitates a valuable interchange of ideas, experiences, and viewpoints. Elderly personnel often provide essential expertise in the business and a mature attitude to resolving problems, while younger employees might offer novel perspectives, technical expertise, and new thinking (Hapomwe, 2020). The amalgamation of generational viewpoints may result in heightened ingenuity, flexibility, and overall group efficacy. Furthermore, teams consisting of individuals from different age groups has enhanced capabilities to comprehend and fulfill the varied requirements of a wide-ranging consumer demographic in the constantly changing telecoms sector. Embracing age diversity enhances workplace culture and fosters the growth of a versatile and highly effective team.

The presence of diverse ethnic backgrounds inside telecommunications companies significantly contributes to improving employee performance. The correlation between ethnic diversity and employee performance is consistent with previous research, demonstrating a significant and beneficial impact. Studies such as Ihemeje et al, 2023; Barang'a and Maende, 2019; Zhuwao, Ngirande, Ndlovu and Setati, 2019; Anam and Attih, 2021. A diverse workforce, including individuals from various ethnic origins, fosters a plethora of ideas, cultural insights, and problemsolving methodologies (Ihemeje et al., 2023). This diversity of perspectives cultivates a more inclusive and inventive atmosphere, where workers are exposed to diverse thought processes and approaches to problem-solving (Anam & Attih, 2021). An culture that promotes inclusivity may result in heightened creativity, enhanced decision-making, and a more comprehensive comprehension of client requirements in varied markets. In addition, the presence of many ethnicities within a workforce fosters a feeling of inclusion among workers, resulting in increased levels of motivation, involvement, and overall contentment with their employment. Embracing ethnic diversity in the telecommunications industry is not only in line with ethical principles but also strategically positions companies to navigate the complexities of a connected and culturally diverse business landscape, ultimately leading to improved overall performance.

Gender diversity in telecommunications companies has a good and substantial effect on staff performance. This is consistent with previous research conducted by Ihemeje et al. (2023), Amsi & Kiflemariam (2023), Chepkemoi, Rop & Chepkwony (2022), Hapomwe (2020), Krishnan



(2020), Barang'a & Maende (2019), and Zhuwao, Ngirande, Ndlovu, and Setati (2019). By prioritizing and actively advocating for gender diversity, a firm cultivates an inclusive culture that harnesses a wide range of abilities and skills (Zhuwao et al., 2019). Women and men often contribute unique viewpoints, communication methods, and problem-solving strategies to discussions (Hapomwe, 2020). In the dynamic telecommunications industry, this diversity serves as a valuable advantage, enabling enterprises to effectively manage intricate obstacles and take advantage of developing prospects. Teams that include individuals of different genders are more capable of comprehending and addressing the needs of a varied client demographic, guaranteeing that goods and services are relatable to a wide array of customers (Krishnan, 2020). Furthermore, the presence of a workplace that includes individuals of both genders has been shown to boost innovation, cooperation, and employee contentment, eventually leading to enhanced overall productivity in the very competitive telecommunications sector.

Self-efficacy is a significant moderating factor in the association between age diversity and employee performance in Nigerian telecommunications companies. Self-efficacy, which pertains to an individual's confidence in their capacity to successfully complete tasks and overcome obstacles, may impact how workers effectively navigate and derive advantages from the diversity present in their teams. Employees who possess a strong sense of self-efficacy are more inclined to see age diversity as a chance to acquire knowledge and engage in cooperative efforts, capitalizing on the extensive expertise of older colleagues and the innovative viewpoints of younger team members. Such a favorable view might result in heightened self-assurance, drive, and eventually improved performance. In contrast, persons with weaker self-efficacy may see age diversity as a challenge or danger, which might impede their capacity to take advantage of the advantages offered by a varied workforce. Hence, it is crucial to acknowledge and promote self-efficacy in order to fully unleash the capabilities of age-diverse teams in Nigerian telecommunications companies, hence impacting the dynamics of employee performance in this specific setting.

The function of self-efficacy is crucial in accentuating the link between ethnic diversity and employee performance in the telecommunications industry in Nigeria. Self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's conviction in their ability to successfully do certain activities, has an impact on how people perceive and handle the challenges of a diverse work environment. Having a strong belief in one's own abilities may enable workers to fully embrace and use the diverse range of ethnic backgrounds, which in turn promotes better communication, cooperation, and joint problem-solving. Having a positive attitude is likely to improve employee performance by accessing a wide range of talents and views. On the other hand, persons who have weaker self-efficacy may find it difficult to navigate or take advantage of ethnic diversity, which might result in misunderstandings or decreased cooperation. Hence, it is important to cultivate self-efficacy in order to enhance a favorable synergy among ethnically diverse teams in Nigerian telecommunications companies, hence influencing employee performance in this particular organizational setting.

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Self-efficacy plays a crucial role in strengthening the connection between gender diversity and employee performance within Nigerian telecoms companies. Self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's confidence in their capacity to achieve goals and surmount obstacles, has an impact on how workers interact with and derive advantages from gender diversity in their teams. Individuals with a strong sense of self-efficacy are able to see gender difference as a valuable asset, which promotes cooperation, efficient communication, and creative resolution of problems. By adopting this optimistic approach, it is probable that employee performance will be improved since it allows for the use of a wide array of abilities and perspectives. In contrast, persons with poorer self-efficacy may impede their ability to fully embrace gender diversity, which might result in misunderstanding or the underutilization of abilities. Hence, the development of self-efficacy is vital for fostering a favorable synergy across gender-diverse teams in Nigerian telecommunications companies, consequently impacting and improving employee performance in this particular organizational setting.

IMPLICATIONS

In the field of organizational dynamics, the comprehensive adoption of diversity is recognized as an essential catalyst for tangible advantages, surpassing age, ethnicity, and gender factors. Essentially, this embrace fosters a dynamic and inclusive work environment, serving as a catalyst for the transformation of creativity and innovation by combining diverse viewpoints and experiences. Outside the boundaries of imagination, this inclusiveness becomes a powerful catalyst, improving the organization's ability to solve problems and providing a sophisticated comprehension of different consumer requirements, especially important in industries such as telecommunications. Diversity has a significant impact on global markets, as it equips diverse teams with the necessary cultural competency and adaptation to effectively traverse the complexities of foreign business environments. Furthermore, this dedication to diversity aligns with ethical and social responsibility principles, enhancing the company's standing and establishing it as a magnet for exceptional people. The significant influence of diversity results in increased employee happiness, more engagement, and higher retention rates, as the inclusive environment fosters a feeling of worth and assistance among people. Embracing age, ethnic, and gender diversity in a company goes beyond basic compliance. It becomes a crucial factor in improving organizational performance and guaranteeing long-term success in the always changing business environment.

Theoretical foundations of workplace diversity, as elucidated by social cognitive theory, suggest a significant influence on individual behaviors within the corporate environment. This theoretical framework posits that people learn and adapt their behaviors via the process of seeing and imitating others. When it comes to age, ethnic, and gender diversity in the workplace, social cognitive theory proposes that being exposed to a range of various role models may have a significant impact on

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workers' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. An observable demonstration of this impact arises when workers see successful cooperation and efficient resolution of issues among heterogeneous teams, resulting in the internal adoption of good behavioral patterns. Moreover, social cognitive theory emphasizes the significant importance of self-efficacy in relation to variety. The proposition suggests that persons who possess stronger self-efficacy are more likely to interact well with colleagues from varied backgrounds. The focus on self-efficacy highlights the need of developing people' confidence to effectively navigate and make important contributions to heterogeneous teams. Social cognitive theory offers a comprehensive theoretical framework that explains how diversity initiatives can influence individual behaviors and promote a more inclusive and collaborative organizational culture. This is achieved by recognizing the interconnected relationship between observational learning and self-efficacy.

CONCLUSION

Workplace diversity has significant consequences for businesses, including both practical and theoretical aspects related to age, ethnicity, and gender. The practical advantages are extensive, enhancing organizational excellence and ensuring long-term sustainability. Creating a dynamic and inclusive work atmosphere is crucial for encouraging creativity and innovation, particularly in sectors such as telecoms that see fast technical breakthroughs. In addition to the obvious practical benefits, the theoretical framework of social cognitive theory offers useful perspectives. The idea highlights the significance of observational learning and self-efficacy in influencing individual behaviors within diverse teams, highlighting the value of varied role models and fostering workers' confidence. Workplace diversity has a comprehensive effect on ethical concerns, social responsibility principles, and increased employee happiness, eventually leading to the attraction and retention of highly skilled individuals. Successful firms see diversity as more than just a need to be checked off, but rather as a crucial strategic necessity. This enables them to effectively negotiate the intricacies of our interconnected business environment with flexibility and creativity.

An organization's constant commitment to embracing diversity demonstrates its determination to use the combined power of its employees for long-lasting and significant achievements.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Initially, the process of acquiring the data was very time-consuming due to the fact that the majority of respondents spent a considerable amount of time to complete and submit the questionnaires. Their demanding timetable significantly contributed to the delay. Furthermore, due to the cross-sectional nature of the study's methodology, the ability to make definitive conclusions regarding causation is limited. In future research, the use of longitudinal or experimental designs may be

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beneficial for establishing causality and acquiring a more profound comprehension of the temporal relationships between variables. Furthermore, the research relied on self-reported measures, so introducing the potential for common method bias. In order to mitigate this bias, it would be beneficial for future research to use diverse data sources or objective metrics. The research conducted in this study was quantitative since it only relied on questionnaires to gather data and determine the study's conclusions. In the future, researchers may choose to conduct a study that focuses more on qualitative research methods. This may lead to several consequences

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