INFLUENCE OF GENDER AND SKILL DIVERSITY ON EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT

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Abstract

Diversity in the workforce refers to the presence of individuals of varying attributes within the workforce. As time passes, issues concerning diversity in the Nigerian workforce have continued to increase, this is shown in the Federal Character Commission (FCM) enacted both in public and private sectors. It is also evident in the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) acts on diversity of the board of public quoted companies, aimed at enhancing the accessibility of equal opportunities in the workplace across ethnic groups, languages and religions which have defined the country's cultural heritage overtime. The study therefore examined the relationship between the diversity of the workforce (gender and skill diversity) and employee commitment using workers in firms within Benin City's banking industry as its population. In achieving this, the study made use of all the permanent and contract staff in the regional offices of three new and three old generation Money Deposits Banks (MDB) in Benin City. Out of a population of two hundred and eighty nine (289), one hundred and sixty eight (168) employees in the regional office of three old generations and three new generations' banks in Benin City were randomly selected using the Yamane formula. Data was elicited through questionnaires from the sampled respondents and were then analysed with descriptive statistics and multiple regressions with the aim of verifying the manner of relationships between the variables. The findings of the study showed that a significant relationship exists between workforce diversity and employee level of commitment in Benin City's banking industry as the R-squared value of the regression model was 0.678, indicating that all the considered dimensions explained 68% of the systematic change in employee commitment in the banking industry. It specifically showed that gender diversity had a significant relationship with employee's commitment in banking industry in Benin City, it found however that the diversity in the skills of the workforce did not significantly influence employee commitment. This study therefore recommends that bank management ensure their firms consist of a proper mix of individuals of different genders. The study also recommends that management uphold the varying gender and cultural values held by its diverse members through appropriate design of jobs, recruitment, selections and deployment policies.

Keywords: Diversity, Employee commitment, Gender, Skills, Workforce

Introduction

Firms are increasingly embracing diversity in their work force as globalisation has led to a greatly increased level of interface and mobility amongst individuals from various backgrounds (Guillaume, Dawson, Otaye-Ebede, Woods & West, 2015). Workforce diversity refers to the differences existing in personal, cultural and demographic attributes (religion, ethnic culture, age, lifestyle, education, disability, economic status, values, physical appearance, national origin, language, sexual orientation, and beliefs) among individuals in an organisation. The increased interest in workforce diversity is primarily occasioned by the need to create work environments in which individual and cultural differences are valued as an increase in the demographic diversity of the workplace has been found to improve the quality of decisions made because varying viewpoints usually emerge from a diverse workforce (Ely & Thomas, 2011). Ongori and Agolla (2007) state that firms characterised by employees of different ethnicity, ages, skills, gender, and traits usually tend to be associated with very high levels of innovation, creativity, and development of high-performance work systems. Increasing the diversity in the workforce of an organisations could lead to increased level of creativity and quality of decisions made (Ofori-Dankwa &Julian, 2014). Such organisations are also more effective in championing organisational change that would enhance individual and organisational performance with little resistance to the change efforts (Jayne & Dipboye, 2014).

The intense level of competition in the banking industry of Nigeria has led to an increase in the need to devise strategies for improved performance. In a bid to make loyal customers, attract new ones and increase employee commitment, banks have embraced workforce diversity such as skill, gender and ethnicity diversity. However, while there are obvious benefits associated with workforce diversity, it appears that diversity results in rivalry amongst individuals as employees develop informal groups within the organisation by associating with some subordinates rather than all because of demographic similarity or differences (Edewor & Aluko, 2007). Watson, Kumar and Michaelsen (2016) opined that workforce diversity creates a context of ‘we versus they mindset’ in which individuals within a firm create relationships which are of high-quality with some people and relationships which are of low-quality with others. It brings about disproportionate treatment which could lead to a work climate that is full of conflicts, prejudices, poor interactions and low mutual trust that may lower employee commitment (Stewart & Johnson, 2009). The implications of workplace diversity appear to be conflicting as Glass (2007) found that age diversity among members of the same organisation tends to decrease effective interactions as younger generation employees tend to be shy when communicating with older generation employees. This is especially when the younger generation employees perceive the older ones to be highly skilled, of different sex and ethnicity (Jones, 2009). Goertzen and Friz (2014) found that cultural diversity significantly increases workgroup conflicts and communication apprehensions. Watson, Kumar & Michaelsen (2016) found that ethnic diversity led to disproportionate attention from managers. Stewart and Johnson (2009) found that a large number of challenges existed in building mutual trust across members of the organisation with diverse ethnicity as employees from the same ethnicity tend to treat each other better than others from different ethnicity. They found that high levels of social ties, shared support, frequent communication, which are indispensable for creating high commitment, were found among employees of the same ethnic group as opposed to employees of different ethnic groups. Ofori-Dankwa and Julian (2014) found that if the diversity level is increased after reaching a certain maximum level it would decrease creativity, innovativeness, quality interpersonal relationships and commitment which is in line with the law of diminishing marginal returns. No study was found in which the combined effect of only gender and skill diversity were studied to understand their impact on employee commitment. In trying to clear up the conflicting findings of studies performed on workforce diversity and its influence on employee performance, this study therefore investigated how only gender and skill diversity influenced employee commitment using the employees within the Nigerian banking industry as its population.

Literature Review

Conceptual framework

Employee Commitment

Employee commitment refers to the strength of identification, emotional attachment and involvement workers have for organisational activities (Meyer & Allen, 1997). They stated that workers who possess a level of commitment which is high would identify more with firm goals, attend work more regularly, and protect the assets of the firm. Abbott, White, and Charles (2015) also state that workers who are emotionally attached to the organisation put in extra effort to perform better on their job and work with optimal creativity. They place their job at the center of their life's interests by being actively involved in activities that would promote their job (Ogba, 2008). Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) indicate that employee commitment reflects workers belief that they are morally obligated to remain in an organisation. They opined that though this belief developed over-time, it is a force that makes an individual engage in actions that would sustain his/her continued involvement in the firm. Employee commitment is individual acceptance and internalising of the organisation's goals and values (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2012).

Gender Diversity and Employee Commitment

Gender diversity primarily deals with equality of opportunity in the work environment, appreciating differences and the creating a work environment in which all genders feel very accepted and also valued. Morais, Pena and Shacket (2014) found that in relation to men, women in top management positions in Africa are still very much unrepresented. They found in their study of gender diversity that even when women have the distinctive qualities required to rightly influence the planned direction of a firm and contribute to its development, only a small number of women occupy senior executive and managerial positions in Africa. Brown (2008) suggested parental expectations be a key factor that has over the years stagnated career aspirations among women. However, men and women now have equal job opportunities as family responsibilities are no longer as much of an obstacle for women getting ahead in their chosen career due to innovations (such as refined baby milk being used in place of traditional breastfeeding) which have led to a reduced work-life conflict thereby enhancing their ability to compete with men in career. Most firms have embraced work-life policies to manage nursing employees causing career aspirations of women to be on the increase (Ali, Kulik, & Metz, 2011). Work life balance policies have equated the possibility of career progress for all genders. This study therefore seeks to investigate if the fact that both males and females now have equal opportunities to progress in their careers influences the commitment level of employees in the firm.

Skill Diversity and Employee Commitment

Due to differences in educational backgrounds diversity in skills often has strong effects as to which individuals associate with each other (Cox & Blake, 2011). This is because similarity among individuals in the organisation with respect to skills implies a language that is shared and also similar experiences, as well as a common basis for the way things are interpreted and responded to (Green, Lopez, Wysoci & Keepner, 2008). It reduces communication apprehensions thereby increases effective interactions (Goertzen & Friz, 2014). However, skill diversity is becoming indispensable in modern organisations due to the different roles, positions and job responsibilities that require different skills to perform in these types of organisation (Hoffman, Harburg, & Maier, 2014). Ely and Thomas (2011) believe that the different viewpoints that usually accompany skill diversity can lead to unique and very creative approaches to the solving of problems, leading to an increase in innovation and the level of creativity causing the firm to better perform. However, work conflicts usually arise when there is skill diversity (Curseu, Raab, Han, & Loenen, 2012). This is because differences in educational backgrounds may increase communication apprehensions thereby hindering communication needed to coordinate activities and development of trust among team members (Goertzen & Friz, 2014). The study seeks to understand if the presence of employees with diverse set of skills will influence the commitment level of employees.

Review of Relevant Theories

Social Categorisation Theory

This theory was developed by Turner (1978), it describes the categorisation of individuals based on important attributes such as age, gender or ethnicity which leads to stereotypes based on these differences. This theory states that such differences in attributes within the workforce could lead to the formation of in-groups and out-groups. This theory predicts that individuals with the same cultural and personal attributes will categorise themselves as the in-group and consequently will favour themselves to the detriment of members of the out-groups (Turner, Brown & Tajfel, 1979). This theory concludes that the emergence of sub groups as a result of demographic diversity will cause communication breakdown and incessant conflict which may lead to reduced employee commitment within the firm. This study builds on this theory as it indicates that an individual’s similarity or dissimilarity to others within the firm in terms of demographic attributes such as gender could influence the level of the individual’s commitment.

Similarity Attraction Theory

This theory is based on attributes considered to be non-salient such as education and values, which cause an increase in interpersonal attachment and attraction (Osbeck & Moghaddam, 1997). It suggests that when persons within a group are similar, a high level of interpersonal attraction among them occurs. Interpersonal attraction is positively related to many team related processes like communication, interest in maintaining group affiliation, cohesiveness and friendship ties (Osbeck & Moghaddam, 1997). Dissimilarity amongst members of a work group could negatively affect the attitude of individuals towards work which could in turn influence the level of their commitment to the firm. The study also builds on this theory as it shows that similarity in attributes such as educational skill could influence the level to which the individual identifies with the firm which in turn would influence the employee's commitment level.

Empirical Review

Gupta (2013) carried out a study which investigated how the diversity of organisational workforce influenced the firm's performance. The findings of the study showed that different diversity aspect had different relationships with the firm's performance. The study also found that overall diversity in organisational workforce leads to enhanced creativity, innovativeness, decision making abilities, competitive advantage and marketing success. The study also found that accountability of senior management, proper communication, evaluation and team building mediate between workforce diversity and performance.

Munjuri (2014) performed a study to determine how the management of workforce diversity influenced the performance of employees within the banking industry on Kenya. The study revealed that banks had strategies such as support to minority groups, balanced recruitment, equal employment opportunities and diversity training. The study also showed that other than an employee's level of education and performance ability, there was no other workforce diversity variable that determined an employee's compensation. The diversity present within the workforce was found to influence the performance of both managerial and non-managerial workers in varying degrees. The impact on non-managerial workers was less than that of managers. The study found that a significant link existed between the effectiveness and productivity of employees, using gender, age, and level of education as the dimensions of workforce diversity.

Darwin and Palanisamy (2015) studied how workforce diversity influenced the level of employee commitment in firms within Singapore. The study made use of questionnaires to collect the views of workers in both the manufacturing as well as service industries in Singapore. Age, gender and ethnicity of the employees were found to be statistically significantly related to the performance of employees.

Muhammad, Mula, Babar, and Qalb (2016) investigated how diversity in the workforce of the Pakistan banking industry influenced the performance of employees. The study employed a random sampling technique to collect data from two hundred and thirty (230) workers in major banks in Lahore. The study found that diversity in ethnicity, gender and level of education significantly influenced the performance of employees in a positive manner while age diversity negatively influence the performance and productivity of employees.

Ehimare and Ogaga-Oghene (2011) studied how the diversity of the workforce influenced the effectiveness of Nigerian banks. The study used Blau's 1977 index of heterogeneity to measure the diversity index. The study found that age, tenure and gender diversities significantly influence the effectiveness of Nigerian banks. The study recommended that the executives of firms employ strategies for properly managing diversity within the workforce.

Mwatumwa, Kingi, Mohamed, Ibua, Omido(2016) investigated how the diversity of the workforce influenced the performance of workers of firms in Mobassa, Kenya. The study found that ethnic, educational and gender diversity did not significantly influence employee performance. The study therefore concluded that diversity in the workforce has no impact on employee performance.

Zam, Norlela and Nur (2014) performed a study to determine how diverse characteristics of employees in the Malaysian banking industry influenced their commitment. The study then further investigated what particular characteristic influenced the commitment level of workers the most. Using questionnaires, data was gathered from three hundred and fifty (350) bank employees in Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Perak, Penang, and Johor. The finding of the study showed that gender diversity had no significant influence on the commitment level of employees but educational level, age and tenure diversities significantly influenced the commitment level of employees.

Jomo and Jomo (2015) studied the influence of workplace diversity on the performance of workers within the banking industry in Kenya. Questionnaires were used to collect data from two hundred and twenty one (221) mid-level managers who worked at the headquarters of all forty three

(43) commercial banks in Kenya. The study found that a positive and significant association existed between educational, age, gender and ethnic diversity and employee performance.

Methodology

The study adopted a cross sectional survey research design in which the questionnaire response format was used to solicit information from respondents. The population consisted of all the permanent and contract staff of the regional offices of First Bank, United Bank for Africa (UBA), Union Bank, Guarantee Trust Bank (GTbank), Zenith Bank and Fidelity bank. The population of this study consists of all the permanent and contract staff of new and old generations Money Deposits Banks (MDB) in Benin City. The total number of Money Deposits Banks (MDB) banks in Benin City is seventeen (17). Among the seventy (17) banks, First Bank, united bank for Africa bank (UBA) and Union Bank, Guarantee Trust Bank (GTbank), Zenith Bank and Fidelity bank were selected. The justifications for the selection of First Bank, United Bank for Africa bank (UBA) and Union Bank is based on their age while the justification for the selection of Guarantee Trust Bank (GTbank), Zenith Bank and Fidelity first Bank is based on their assets and accessibility.

The study focused on only employees in regional offices of the selected old and new generation banks because of 1) the regional offices of Nigerian banks have larger staff than ordinary branches except for the headquarters; 2) human resource practices including diversity policies and programs, recruitment and training are usually implemented at in regional office ; 3) it was easy to access and get the total number of employees of regional offices of the selected banks in Benin City.

Another critical reason we focused on regional offices of some selected banks stem from the study of Riordan and Shore (2013) that opined that study of workforce diversity within teams, work unit, branch office where the employees can be easily accessed will yield more fruit than focusing on broader workplace settings where it would be difficult to access a larger number of employees.

Through the assistance of the human resource managers at each of the banks, we were able to obtain the total staff of old generation (First Bank, UBA, Union Bank) banks and new generations banks (Guarantee Trust bank, Zenith Bank fidelity bank) in their regional offices in Benin City. Thus, the total population was 289, which comprises 148 and 141 employees of new and old generation banks respectively.

Using Yamane (1967) formula

n = $\frac{N}{1+N(0.05)^2}$

Where:

n=Sample size,

I=Constant Value,

N= Population Size

e= Coefficient of Confidence or error terms (0.05).

Applying this formula thus: n = $\frac{289}{1+289(0.05)^2}$ = 167.7.

a sample size of approximately 168 was gotten. It further employed a proportionate allocation formula to ensure that employees in the selected banks surveyed were proportionate. Using the $n_h = \frac{Nh}{N} \times n$. Where , n_h = sample size for stratum *h*; N_h = population size for stratum *h*; N = total population.

Table 3.1: Number of Employees Targeted for Survey in each of the Bank

S/N	Banks	Regional Office	No of Staff	No of Staff target to Survey
1	First Bank	Ring Road	54	31
2	UBA	Mission Road	50	29
3	Union Bank	Mission Road	44	26
4	Guarantee Trust bank,	Mission Road	49	29
5	Zenith Bank	Akpakpava	50	29
6	Fidelity bank	Mission Road	42	24
	Total	6	289	168

Source: Researcher's construct (2019)

The data was analysed using descriptive statistics which include frequency tables, percentages analysis, mean, standard deviation, and standard error mean. The Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) estimation technique was also employed, the model used for the regression analysis is expressed generally as;

$EMPCT\ f(\ GDV, SDV)$

The regression model for this study is given as;

$EMPCT = \beta_0 + \beta_1 GDV_i + \beta_2 SDV_i + \varepsilon_i$

Where:

$EMPCT$ = employee commitment
GDV = gender diversity
SDV = skills diversity
β_0 = constant
$\beta_1, \beta_2 > 0$ = coefficients and a priori signs of the independent variables
ε_i = Error term

Validity and Reliability of the Research Instruments

The content validity was assessed by experts on the subject, based on their feed-back the questionnaire was improved to remove participant bias and errors. The reliability of the instrument of research was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha value. The factors reliability values were found to all be above 0.7 which is recommended by Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson and Tatham (2010).

Table 3.2: Reliability Test

Variables	**Number of Items**	**Cronbach's AlphaValue**
Employees Commitment	13	0.92
Gender diversity	5	0.83
Skills diversity	4	0.89

Source: Researcher's Computation (2019)

Results

This study uses multiple regression analysis to examine the link existing between gender and skill diversity and commitment level of employees in the banking industry in Benin City, Nigeria. The analysis was conducted using 5% level of significance. The result is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 The regression result

	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
Model	B	Std Error	Beta	T	Sig
Constant	-0.347	0.236		-1.467	0.144
SDV	0.012	0.04	0.017	0.292	0.770
GDV	0.286	0.043	0.361	6.698	0.000

R-Square	0.678
Adjusted R	0.666
F-Statistics	56.50
P-Value(sign)	0.000
Durbin Watson	1.591
Std Error	0.34985

a. Predictors: (Constant), GDV, SDV
b. Dependent Variable: EMPCT

The model equation stated as;

$$EMPCT = \beta_0 + \beta_1 GDV_i + \beta_2 SDV_i + \varepsilon_i$$

The regression fit can now be written as;

$$EMPCT = \beta_0 + \underset{(6.698)}{0.286GDV_i} + \underset{(0.292)}{0.012SDV_i} + \varepsilon_i$$

From the regression result, the R-squared value of the regression model is 0.678, indicating that all the considered dimensions (gender and skills) of workforce diversity which constituted the elements in the regression model when grouped or combined together, explain 68% of the systematic change in employee commitment in the banking industry, these dimensions of workforce diversity when combined or grouped have F-statistic of 56.50 at p-value of 0.000 which is less than 5% level of significance. This means that overall there exists a significant linear relationship between workforce diversity and employee commitment in the banking industry in Benin City. The Durbin Watson (D.W) of 1.591 indicates the absence of auto correlation.

Using the mean statistical analysis tool the study found that the overall level of gender diversity is very high in the banking industry in Benin City. Gender diversity (GDV) has t-statistics of 6.699 at p value of 0.000 which is less than 5% of significant. This result means that gender diversity in the workforce has a significant relationship with employee commitment in the banking industry in Benin City. The coefficient of the relationship is 0.286. This further indicates that a percentage increase or decrease in gender diversity in the workforce in the banking sector will result in an approximate 29 percent change in employee commitment in the banking industry in Benin City.

Using the mean statistical analysis tool the study found that the overall level of skills diversity is very high in the banking industry in Benin City. Skill diversity (SDV) in the regression model has t-statistics of 0.292 at p value of 0.770 which is greater than a 5% level of significance. This indicates that skill diversity in the workforce has no significant relationship with employee commitment in the banking industry in Benin City.

Discussion of Findings

The study found that the commitment level of employees is influenced significantly by workforce diversity in the banking industry in Benin City. This finding is consistent with that of Gupta (2013) who found that workforce diversity to significantly enhance decision-making, creativity, and innovative commitment. This finding is also consistent with that of Munjuri (2014) who found that workforce diversity affects the productivity and effectiveness of employees.

The study also found that that gender diversity has a significant relationship with employee commitment in the banking industry in Benin City. This result supports the study of Darwin and Palanisamy's (2015) who found that age, gender and ethnicity of the employees statistically significantly related to the performance of employees. Its findings are also in consistent with those of Muhammad, Mula, Babar and Qalb (2016) who revealed that diversity in gender had a relationship which was significant with the performance of workers. The findings of the study is also in line with those of Ehimare And Ogaga-Oghene's (2011) who demonstrated that gender diversity is significantly related to effectiveness of Nigeria banks. The finding of the study however contradict those of Mwatumwa, Kingi, Mohamed, Ibua and Omido(2016) who found that the diversity of gender in the workforce had no impact which was significant on employee attitude and commitment.

Another finding of this study was that diversity in skills within the firm causes no impact of significance on employee commitment. This contradicts the finding of the study carried out by Zam, Norlela, and Nur (2014) who found that education level significantly impacts the commitment level of workers in the banking industry of Malaysia. The findings are also not consistent with those Jomo and Jomo (2015) who showed that there was a significant association between education diversity and employee performance in the banking industry.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study concludes that diversity in the workforce significantly influences the level of commitment employees have in organisations within the banking industry. The study found that in the banking industry, a high level of employee commitment resulted from diversity and inclusion. In this regard, sustaining an increase in workplace diversity through programs geared towards valuing, appreciating, accepting and tolerating individuals of various genders may improve the level of commitment banks have in the delivering to customers. It could also possibly stimulate the ability of banks to increase retention, satisfaction and attraction of new customers as the diversity of workforce is not only significantly associated with the readiness of employees to exert considerable amount of effort on behalf of the firm but it is also associated with creative approaches to problem-solving which are vital elements for gaining superiority in the marketplace.

The study recommends that bank management sustain efforts in gender equality and inclusion through their human resource policies.

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