

## Qualitative Analysis of the Impact of Cultural Diversity on Organizational Performance in Lagos University Teaching Hospital

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### Abstracts

This study aimed to examine the impact of cultural diversity on organizational performance at a major hospital, focusing on the experiences and perspectives of employees. Utilizing a qualitative research design, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of eight respondents selected from the staff of Lagos University Teaching Hospital, based on Creswell's guidelines for qualitative analysis. Thematic analysis, supported by NVivo software, revealed that while cultural diversity significantly enhances the work environment by fostering innovation, improving problem-solving, and promoting collaboration, challenges such as discrimination and unequal treatment persist. Employees from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds acknowledged that their unique perspectives enriched decision-making and contributed to a more inclusive atmosphere. However, instances of bias in hiring and promotion practices were reported, negatively impacting minority group employees and creating a sense of inequality. Furthermore, efforts to promote inclusivity, such as cultural events, were often perceived as forced and insincere, failing to create genuine cultural integration. The study concludes that while cultural diversity has the potential to enhance organizational performance, realizing its full benefits requires consistent enforcement of anti-discrimination policies and authentic inclusion efforts. Recommendations include strengthening the enforcement of existing policies, ensuring fairness in hiring and promotion practices, and fostering genuine cultural inclusion through meaningful engagement from all employees. These steps are crucial for creating a truly supportive and inclusive workplace environment, allowing the organization to fully leverage the advantages of diversity and enhance overall performance.

**Keywords:** Cultural diversity; Ethnic diversity, Religion diversity and Service Quality

### 1.1 Introduction

In recent years, global legislation has increasingly prohibited organizations from discriminating against individuals on any basis. Where the importance of diversity and inclusion has been widely acknowledged by the majority of organizations. Corporations are progressively realizing that workplace diversity surpasses mere legal compliance; it represents a fundamental strategic necessity for organizational success (Olowookere, 2021). In an ever-evolving world, the significance of workforce diversity is escalating, rendering it a pivotal focal point for organizations globally. Embracing diversity not only

fosters a culture of inclusivity but also unlocks innovation, enhances decision-making processes, and augments organizational performance.

Over the years, the modern workforce has undergone remarkable evolution in terms of gender, ethnicity, religion, and culture, among other factors. This transformation has been significantly influenced by globalization. The movement of human capital has led individuals to work in locations, organizations, and countries with cultural, political, and religious environments distinct from their upbringing (Felix et al., 2023). As globalization strengthens interconnectedness worldwide, the population of individuals living and working outside their native countries continues to expand. Consequently, employers are increasingly tasked with navigating diverse cultural landscapes, often encountering individuals who speak different languages, embrace varied lifestyles, and possess deeply rooted belief systems and cultural backgrounds.

In light of the crucial role that achieving organizational objectives and maintaining competitive edge play, organization are increasingly casting their nets wide to recruit employees. These employees bring to the table not just advanced knowledge and skills, but also the attitudes necessary to propel the organization forward. According to Holck (2018), this expansion in search horizons underscores the growing importance of workforce diversity, which is significantly shaped by talent acquisition strategies. Consequently, as Dobbin and Kalev (2022) point out, managing workplace diversity has emerged as one of the paramount managerial challenges of the last three decades. This emphasis on diversity not only enriches the workplace but also equips organizations to thrive in the global market, making it a pivotal aspect of modern business strategy.

In Africa, workforce diversity has been characterized in both limited and broad terms, and it is acknowledged as an important concept for human resource management (Setati et al., 2019). Diversity difficulties in Africa have been connected to discrimination and exclusion from traditional cultural group organizations. It has been suggested that if diversity is a term that is open to all people, the detection of patterns of discrimination will become very difficult. Workplace diversity management has a substantial impact on the success of African organizations through policy like affirmative action and equal employment opportunities.

The breakdown of good organizational communication had resulted in contradictory relationships among the workforce due to inescapable self-interest. Some of the obstacles to managing diversity in the workforce are political influence, cultural differences, a shortage of competent workers due to business bureaucracy, and the fact that the majority of firms comply with diversity in the workforce more for legal reasons than for general gain. Nigeria has one of the world's most ethnically diverse populations, with different ethnic groupings, languages, dialects, and religions. All of these have influenced the development of Nigerian culture. A country with a diverse ethnic population, and thus a diversity manager, would surely encounter challenges in designing, communicating, and implementing plans that would be acceptable to its diverse constituency (Marsiglia, Kulis & Lechuga-Peña, 2021). This is because people's cultural orientation can lead to preconceptions that discriminate against minorities, women, and specific religious groups, which can lead to crisis situations and hinder development efforts if they are not managed effectively. This is evident in the public sector, which is famed for its diversity

and has resulted in steadily declining performance in practically all of its constituents over time.

At Lagos University Teaching Hosiptal, these global and local dynamics play out in the daily operations and interactions within the institution. Lagos University Teaching Hosiptal, a leading tertiary hospital in Nigeria, experiences the impacts of cultural diversity firsthand through its patient population and workforce. The hospital's ability to manage this diversity effectively is crucial for delivering high-quality care and maintaining a collaborative work environment. Addressing the challenges of cultural diversity at Lagos University Teaching Hosiptal involves understanding and integrating various cultural backgrounds, which can enhance patient satisfaction and improve institutional performance.

### **Statement of the problem**

Cultural diversity within healthcare teams, particularly in teaching hospitals, is believed to influence various aspects of organizational performance. Tribalism, regional identity, and nepotism still appear to exist in most organisations in Nigeria, especially in public establishments, because inclusiveness in many organisations involves kin selection and kin altruism, in which groups with similar backgrounds or affiliations help others with similar backgrounds or affiliations based on their coefficient of relationship, which affect the employee's perception of fairness and justice, which in turn affects organisational service effectiveness. Cases of racial prejudice and other forms of discrimination in recruitment, advancement, and other employer-employee relationship activities are still taking place in

organizations (Baum, 2021). Also, while several studies, such as Obita (2019), Nafiu et al. (2020), Ekpendu et al. (2019), Chabo-Terver et al. (2023) and Olowookere (2021) have explored the link between cultural diversity and performance in various regions, there is a lack of studies focused specifically on hospitals in Southwest Nigeria. The healthcare system, cultural landscape (religious and ethnic makeup), and patient demographics in Nigeria might significantly influence these relationships compared to other regions included in the broader study.

## **2.1 Literature Review**

### **Cultural diversity**

Cultural diversity is referred to as the diversity of country cultures among team members. A person's national culture is that of the nation in which they presently reside (Proudfoot et al., 2023). Cultural diversity refers to the presence of a variety of different cultures and cultural identities within a particular group or society. It encompasses differences in language, customs, traditions, beliefs, values, and behaviors. Cultural diversity can be found in various contexts, including the workplace, teams, and society as a whole. In the workplace, cultural diversity can have both positive and negative effects on work group processes and outcomes (Han & Beyerlein, 2016). According to Lo, Wang and Zhan (2020) cultural diversity enhance work group functioning under certain conditions. It can bring valuable differences in knowledge, experience, and perspectives that may benefit team performance.

**Dimension of cultural dimension**

The study proceeds to evaluate the various dimensions and measures of cultural dimension which includes those captured and not captured in the scope of the study and are presented as follows:

**Ethnic diversity**

An ethnic group is a collection of people who share similar cultural traditions and customs and give their members a sense of national identity (Baum, 2021). According to Olowookere (2021), ethnicity is a tribalistic grouping that shares historical roots, cultural practices, and history. As a result of the societal trend toward multiculturalism, multi-ethnic groups are becoming increasingly prominent in businesses, including groups with ties to education, family, and religion (Qureshi et al., 2022). According to Maturo et al. (2019), having ethnically varied perspectives on a team is useful for problem-solving and improving team performance. Differences in ethnic quality were a good predictor of team performance. According to Setati et al. (2019), ethnicity can replace social base, and ethnic traits can be depended on to ensure innovative execution since they broaden the organisation's points of view and perceptions.

Ethnic diversity in the workplace is a multifaceted concept that extends beyond merely quantifying the number of employees from different ethnic backgrounds. It encompasses a rich array of sociocultural differences, including linguistic diversity, cultural nuances, and a wide spectrum of belief systems among individuals (Tamunomiebi & John-Eke, 2020). Employees hailing from diverse ethnic origins bring forth a multitude of perspectives, experiences, and skills to the organizational setting, contributing to a dynamic and vibrant work environment (Snyder et al. 2018). This diversity goes beyond surface-level differences and delves into the complex tapestry of human identity, shaping individuals' values, behaviors, and interactions within the workplace. Embracing ethnic diversity in the workplace not only promotes inclusivity and equity but also cultivates a fertile ground for innovation, creativity, and collaboration.

**Religion Diversity**

Religion emphasizes intellectual concepts, whereas spirituality emphasizes a personal relationship with the universe and its constituents (Byrd & Scott, 2014). Workplaces that are spiritually oriented are known to be more welcoming and reconciliatory of demographic and ideological diversity (Canda et al., 2019). A religious and spiritual worldview and practice that is egalitarian and inclusive may provide people with a sense of purpose, a sense of connection, and pleasant social relations, as well as improve their ability to engage with one another without fear of condemnation (Canda et al., 2019). Religious diversity refers to the presence of a variety of different religious beliefs and practices within a particular society or community. It encompasses differences in religious traditions, rituals, values, and worldviews based on religious affiliations.

**Organizational performance**

Organizational performance in the health sector refers to the effectiveness and efficiency with which healthcare institutions, such as hospitals, clinics, and other medical facilities, deliver quality healthcare services to patients (Chmielewska et al., 2022). This performance is often measured through a variety of indicators, including patient outcomes, operational efficiency, financial health, patient satisfaction, and employee engagement (Chmielewska et al., 2022). High organizational performance in healthcare

is crucial as it directly impacts patient care and safety, the reputation of the healthcare institution, and the overall health of the population served. Effective performance management in the health sector involves continuous improvement in service delivery, the adoption of best practices, efficient resource utilization, and the integration of advanced medical technologies (Ilangakoon et al., 2022). These efforts help ensure that healthcare organizations can provide high-quality care while maintaining cost-effectiveness and sustainability. In addition to clinical outcomes, organizational performance in the health sector also encompasses factors such as the quality of patient-provider interactions, the accessibility of services, and the responsiveness of healthcare systems to emerging health challenges (Ilangakoon et al., 2022). Moreover, employee performance and satisfaction play a vital role in healthcare organizational performance, as motivated and well-supported staff are essential for delivering patient-centered care (De Mesa, 2023). Ultimately, the success of healthcare organizations in achieving their goals depends on their ability to balance these multiple dimensions of performance while adapting to the ever-changing landscape of healthcare needs and expectations.

### **Underpinning Theory: Social Categorization**

The social categorization hypothesis seeks to identify the social cognitive processes that underpin in-group formation (a group with which people recognize, respect, belong, and feel loyal) and out-group formation (a group with which people do not want to interact), as well as group identity achievement (Reimer et al., 2020). It also aims to explain the establishment of group identities, which results in attitudes and conflicts between and within groups, as well as cognitive biases, prejudice, and stereotyping. As a result, discrepancies between workgroup members may appear to endanger other people's identification as similar (in-group) or dissimilar (out-group), a categorization that might potentially interfere with the group approach (Reimer et al., 2022).

Social Categorization Theory sheds light on the psychological processes underpinning how individuals classify others into distinct groups based on observable characteristics such as race, gender, and age (Zhang et al., 2023). This theory elucidates the formation of in-groups (with whom individuals identify) and out-groups (those perceived as different), significantly influencing workplace dynamics (Kaur et al., 2022). In diverse work settings, such categorization can lead to biases, stereotypes, and the emergence of in-group favoritism, potentially hindering collaboration, communication, and inclusivity. These dynamics underscore the challenges organizations face in managing diversity effectively. To mitigate these issues, it's essential for organizations to be proactive in fostering an inclusive culture. By understanding and addressing the implications of social categorization, organizations can leverage the benefits of diversity, such as enhanced creativity, innovation, and improved decision-making, thereby strengthening their competitive advantage in a global marketplace.

### **Impact of cultural diversity on Organizational Performance**

Cultural diversity has a profound impact on organizational performance, particularly in the health sector, where the ability to cater to diverse patient populations is essential. A workforce composed of individuals from varied cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds brings a wealth of perspectives, ideas, and problem-solving approaches, which can enhance innovation and decision-making processes within the organization

(Dongol,2022). This diversity allows healthcare providers to better understand and meet the unique needs of different patient groups, thereby improving patient satisfaction and care quality. Ekpendu et al. (2019) demonstrated that effective ethnic diversity management positively influences employee engagement in Nigerian manufacturing firms, suggesting that corporations can enhance engagement by focusing on diversity management strategies. Similarly, Roy (2022) found that in Bangladesh's banking sector, diversity in age, gender, and ethnicity has a statistically significant positive effect on organizational performance, emphasizing the importance of workforce diversity in improving organizational effectiveness. Both studies underscore the critical role that diversity plays in fostering a productive and engaged workforce.

The research by Ikon and Okolie-Osemene (2017) and Nafiu et al. (2020) further supports the connection between diversity and organizational success. Ikon and Okolie-Osemene (2017) found that ethnic diversity is positively correlated with service quality at Nigerian Breweries Plc, advocating for the integration of diversity management into corporate structures to enhance service delivery. Similarly, Nafiu et al. (2020) revealed that various aspects of diversity, such as age, religion, and educational background, significantly affect job satisfaction and organizational outcomes in small firms in Nigeria. The studies by Ohita (2019) also reinforce the idea that diversity in teams, specifically in Kenyan private universities, significantly impacts team cohesion and employee satisfaction, suggesting regular training and surveys to effectively manage diverse workforces. Collectively, these studies underscore the crucial influence of diversity on organizational performance and the need for thoughtful diversity management to harness its benefits fully.

### **3.1 Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative research design to investigate relevant variables among the staff of Lagos University Teaching Hospital. The qualitative approach was selected to obtain in-depth insights into participants' experiences and perspectives, which is essential for understanding the complexities of human behavior within a specific context. The choice of this approach is justified by its effectiveness in capturing the rich, detailed accounts necessary for exploring the nuances of the participants' views.

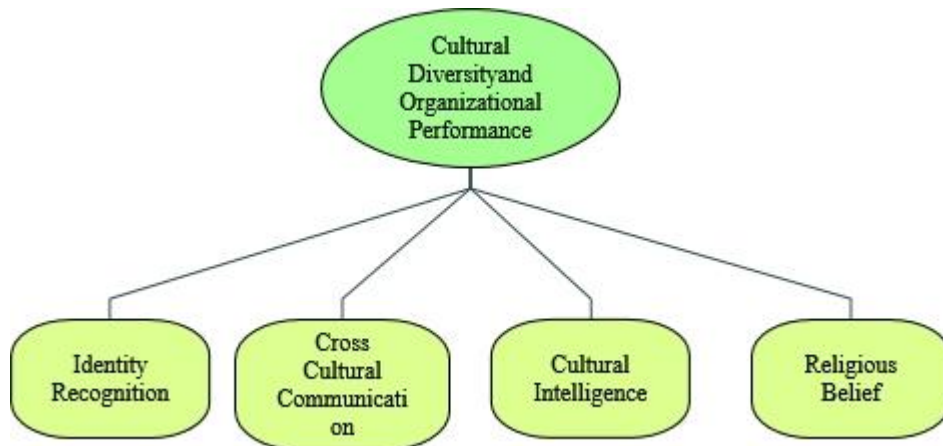
A total of 8 respondents were purposefully selected for interviews, adhering to Creswell (2014) guideline that fewer than 8 participants can provide sufficient depth for qualitative analysis. The data collection process involved semi-structured interviews, which were chosen for their flexibility in allowing respondents to freely express their thoughts while ensuring that all key topics were adequately addressed. This method facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the issues under investigation, enabling participants to articulate their experiences in their own words.

Thematic analysis was applied to analyze the qualitative data, involving the identification, analysis, and interpretation of patterns (themes) within the data. This approach provided a nuanced understanding of the participants' responses. To enhance the rigor and reliability of the analysis, NVivo software was used for coding and organizing the data, allowing for a systematic and thorough exploration of the qualitative data. This methodological approach was instrumental in uncovering valuable insights into the dynamics among the staff of Lagos University Teaching Hospital

#### 4.1 Thematic Analysis

The research question states that; to what extent does the influence of cultural diversity influence organizational performance. To what degree does organisational performance get impacted by cultural diversity. Nigerian organisations can benefit from cultural variety by functioning more peacefully in the face of cultural differences and achieving beneficial outcomes. Negative synergy, on the other side, can result from a lack of respect for and knowledge of diversity. To meet the needs of employees with a variety of socio-cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds as well as age, gender, mental health, and parental status, more cultural diversity in management was required.

Figure 4. 1 Sub-Theme on Cultural Diversity and Organizational Performance in Lagos University Teaching Hospital



**Sources:** Field Survey, 2024

Workplaces are becoming increasingly diverse, with employees from different ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds (Tamunomiebi & John-Eke, 2020). This diversity can bring a wealth of perspectives and ideas, but it also presents challenges in terms of ensuring fair treatment and promoting tolerance

As supported by RES 8 stated that:

*“The hospital is committed to promoting tolerance and fair treatment for employees from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. They foster an environment of respect, acknowledging individual beliefs and identities. This is achieved through zero-tolerance policy for discrimination, and active reporting of incidents”*

RES 3 also state that;

*“The hospital has strict non-discrimination and anti-harassment policies, accommodation policies for religious practices, and cultural events like cultural festivals and interfaith dialogues. These events promote mutual understanding and respect among employees “*

RES 4 also buttress the submission of RES 3 that: *“the hospital is a strong advocate for diversity and inclusion, as we believe it not only enriches our work environment but also enhances the quality of care we provide to our patients. By promoting tolerance, fair treatment, equal career progression, and team collaboration, we*

*create a hospital that values and respects every individual, regardless of their ethnic or religious background “*

As stated by RES 7 *“Collaborating with individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds enriches my experience in profound ways. Their unique perspectives broaden my problem-solving approach, exposing me to a spectrum of potential solutions I might*

*not have considered otherwise. This interaction fuels creativity and innovativeness, leading to more robust and comprehensive solutions. Moreover, it enhances my learning style by providing exposure to different cultural contexts and methodologies, fostering intellectual growth and cultural competency”*

RES 3 corroborate with RES 7;

*“The diverse perspectives of different ethnic groups prove invaluable when tackling any task in our hospital. This vibrant exchange of ideas allows for a thorough examination of all potential solutions, ensuring that the best one is chosen and further refined for optimal success. Through this collaborative process, we not only leverage the collective wisdom of diverse minds but also foster a more inclusive and innovative environment, ultimately leading to the best possible outcome for the task at hand.”*

The presence of individuals from various ethnic backgrounds within an organization demonstrably enhances its efficiency (Jankelová et al., 2021). This positive influence stems from the ability of individuals, despite their differences, to collaborate effectively towards the achievement of shared objectives. In support of this;

RES 1 stated that *“The fostering collaborative spirit has established in me a deep sense of togetherness, transcending individual cultures and promoting a shared sense of purpose and connection. This fresh view has enriched my understanding of the value of diversity and its power in driving company success through collaborative efforts.”*

In support of RES1, RES 4 stated further stated that:

*“There are have been issues where employee minority group face discrimination during the hiring process. The hospital in some instances shows a preference for candidates belonging to the dominant religion, leading to unfair treatment based on religious affiliation. I have faced insensitive comments based on my religious identity. This contributes to a toxic work culture and negatively impact my performance.”*

However, RES 5 stated that

*“At the hospital, we've been striving to create an inclusive and fair workplace environment. However, there have been instances where employees from minority cultural backgrounds have experienced discriminatory practices related to promotions. For example, there have been cases where promotions seem to favour certain individuals based on factors other than qualifications or performance, creating a sense of inequality.”*

In support of this RES 6 state that;

*“Even though there are supposed to be rules against discrimination, they're rarely enforced, and people who behave poorly often get away with it. This creates an environment where people from diverse backgrounds feel unwelcome*



*and unsupported. The organization might try to celebrate different cultures and religions, but it often feels forced and insincere”*

## Discussion

Cultural diversity in the workplace, when managed effectively, can enhance innovation, creativity, and problem-solving capabilities (Tamunomiebi & John-Eke, 2020). Diverse perspectives contribute to more comprehensive solutions, as noted by Jankelová et al. (2021), who emphasize that collaboration among individuals from different ethnic backgrounds enhances organizational efficiency. However, challenges arise in ensuring fairness and inclusion, as organizations may struggle with instances of discrimination, especially in hiring and promotion processes (Tamunomiebi & John-Eke, 2020). Furthermore, identity recognition, cultural intelligence, and cross-cultural communication are vital in fostering a cohesive and inclusive workplace (Jankelová et al., 2021). According to Tamunomiebi and John-Eke (2020), fostering an inclusive environment requires organizations to implement strict policies against discrimination and harassment, which are crucial for promoting respect and collaboration among employees from different cultural and religious backgrounds.

Cultural diversity is essential in fostering innovativeness and creativity within teams. It helps in understanding and catering to a diverse client base, which leads to better customer satisfaction. This is supported by literature such as Dongol (2022), who found that cross-cultural interactions enhance creativity and innovativeness in teams by broadening perspectives and fostering a deeper understanding of diverse environment. Also, this aligns with the findings of Mor Barak (2022), who emphasized that such initiatives lead to greater equity and inclusion, positively impacting employee morale and productivity. An inclusive and equitable environment enhances employee satisfaction and retention. Roy (2022) found that various aspects of diversity, including cultural diversity, positively affect

organizational performance in Bangladesh's banking sector. This supports the current study's results, highlighting that cultural diversity contributes to better organizational outcomes.

## 5.1 Conclusion and Recommendation

The results clearly indicate a major effect of cultural diversity on organizational performance within the hospital. Though policies and institutional initiatives have been rolled out regarding tolerance, respect, and inclusiveness, employee experiences range from positive outcome-related to still ongoing challenges. Cultural diversity is associated with enriching the work environment, enhancing creative problem-solving, and increasing innovation, thus improving team collaboration and consequently organizational efficiency. However, instances of discrimination and unequal treatment, particularly towards minority groups, undermine these benefits and contribute to a toxic work culture.

The study recommends hospital should reassess redesign its policies for the hiring of its staff and promotion based on qualification and performance record. Transparent criteria and processes can allow for building trust and the creation of equal opportunities for all, rather than based on any religious or ethnic background.

While there are some cultural events and activities underway, it is essential to underpin them with greater genuineness and significance. Such fostering of authentic participation

and commitment from all staff, plus a respectful and aware culture, can help ensure improvement for the sake of creating a more supportive and cohesive work environment.

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