

INFLUENCE OF GENDER DIVERSITY ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL INNOVATION IN NIMPAT GROUP OF COMPANIES, ABUJA

Ogechukwu Jecinta Anusionwu DBA

Department of Business Administration, University of America, Curacao.

jecidenis@yahoo.com

Opaluwa Sulaiman Omachonu

Department of Business Administration, University of America, Curacao.

onuh2010@yahoo.com

Ikupolati Micheal

Professors in University of America, Curacao.

ABSTRACT

The study examined the effects of gender diversity on employee engagement and organisational innovation at the NIMPAT Group of Companies in Abuja. The investigation highlighted the scant knowledge of how gender diversity impacts these two variables in the Nigerian context, with an emphasis on looking into overcoming cultural barriers and gender biases. The approach adopted was a survey-based one, targeting employees working in different departments of the NIMPAT Group. Structured questionnaires containing Likert-scale responses to assess perceptions about the effects of gender diversity were used to collect data. Analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations along with multiple regressions to relate the various variables. The results indicate that gender diversity, when complementary to inclusive leadership practices including mentorship and fair policies, significantly enhanced employee engagement and organisational innovation. Gender stereotypes could obstruct collaborative endeavours if not effectively managed; thus, it is crucial to have uniquely fashioned diversity strategies in light of Nigeria's different cultural context.

Keywords: *Gender Diversity, Employee Engagement, Organizational Innovation, Inclusive Leadership, Workplace Inclusion, Diversity Management.*

1. Introduction

The concept of gender diversity, which signifies the representation of various gender identities in the workforce, is operationalised as an independent variable in this research, while employee engagement and organisational innovation serve as dependent variables. The connection lies in the ability of gender diversity to engender multiple perspectives – these perspectives hence enhance creativity and increase employees' commitment towards organisational goals. Through the lens of innovation, women may offer interpersonal skills and collaborative techniques, while men may provide distinct problem-solving approaches. Nevertheless, such apparent benefits may not be realised due to outright biases and stereotypes that require inclusive practices to avail the true essence of collaboration. Buse et al. (2021) claim that

gender-diverse teams improve problem-solving and innovative application of complementary strengths; however, they assume their fair treatment – equality of opportunity and inclusion – in their study, which is not always present in practical situations. Meanwhile, Ridgeway and Correll (2021) describe how gender stereotypes may sabotage cooperation, especially in masculine contexts, with examples of seeing women as less authoritative. Though this perspective is profound, it is highly Western in its applications, hence not reflecting particular cultural differentiations, perhaps of Nigeria, where traditional division of labour can amplify the bias. Inclusive leadership is thought to counteract these effects by Hoobler et al. (2021) but rests on qualitative data that restricts generalisations. A critique of these studies elucidates a lacuna in detailing how cultural and organisational elements are

correlates of the gender diversity scenario in the less developed economies. Thus gender diversity's impact on engagement and innovation in employee engagement shall be examined as dependent upon certain specifically adapted inclusive practices in this study.

The moving of gender diversity as a priority in organisations represents a worldwide change toward the recognition of a strategic importance. The Nigerian woman enjoys such a change in consideration of cultural values and rising workforce participation by women due to educational advantage and policy reforms. Eagly and Carli (2020) indicated that in a worldwide way, gender diversity imparts development to organisational flexibility, outlining that diverse teams are better able to cope in complex market environments. Their reasoning, however, glosses over challenges within the context of patriarchal societies, where behavioural roles tend to be rigidly defined. From a Nigerian standpoint, Oluwatayo et al. (2024) argue that increasing female participation in service sectors enhances engagement, yet structural impediments such as limited access to leadership roles remain. Their focus on service sectors limits applicability in varied sectors such as NIMPAT Group. This organisation encounters a competitive setting in Abuja, struggling under the economic pressures that put gender dynamics at stake. Shore et al. (2020) asserted that the assessment of success in an organisation is primarily hinged on non-financials – controlling engagement and innovation, particularly in dynamic settings. Yet their framework does not take into consideration the cultural aspect in Nigeria that additionally shapes gender impressions. From China, Zhang et al. (2020) link innovation to gender diversity, but their conclusion may not be applicable to Nigeria because of socioeconomic context. It has been noted that the heightening of interest in non-financial indicators is particularly relevant to measuring the effects of gender diversity in this study with the unique cultural and economic context of Nigeria.

In Nigerian organizations, workplace diversity whether in terms of gender, culture,

ethnic background, or age has yet to be fully appreciated for its impact on non-financial performance measures like employee engagement, innovation, customer satisfaction, and organizational culture (Nwakanma, 2024; Korovyakovskaya, 2024). Despite growing global evidence supporting the positive effects of workplace diversity on various performance metrics, Nigerian businesses still struggle with harnessing these benefits due to deeply ingrained societal norms and organizational structures that may inadvertently limit workplace diversity efforts (Agu et al., 2024; Gharti & Modi, 2024).

Several challenges contribute to this problem: First, there is limited understanding of how gender diversity influence different aspects of innovation within the Nigerian business context. Second, some organizations acknowledge the potential benefits of gender diversity, however they often lack effective strategies to harness its diverse perspectives for employee engagement and organisational innovation purposes. Third, there is insufficient empirical evidence from Nigerian organizations demonstrating the link between gender diversity and enhanced innovation outcomes (Nwakanma, 2024).

NIMPAT Group of Companies, as a significant player in Nigeria's manufacturing sector, faces these challenges as it seeks to enhance its employee engagement and organisational innovation capabilities in an increasingly competitive market. The organization's diverse workforce, reflecting Nigeria's diversity, represents a potential source of innovative ideas and approaches. However, in leveraging this diversity for innovation, a deeper understanding of the relationship between age diversity and employee engagement and organisational innovation outcomes are essential.

The study seeks to provide an answer to the research question: "To what extent does gender diversity influence employee engagement and organizational innovation at NIMPAT Group of Companies, Abuja?" The study sought to evaluate the effect of gender diversity on employee engagement and organizational innovation at NIMPAT Group of

Companies, Abuja.

The following null hypothesis was tested at 5% level of significance:

H0: Gender diversity has no significant effect on employee engagement and organizational innovation at NIMPAT Group of Companies, Abuja.

2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Gender diversity: in the workplace means accommodating people from many different gender identities, thus going beyond binarist categories to equitably represent all of them. Just like other such aspects of institutional diversity, Krishnan (2020) conceptualises gender diversity as a factor influencing employee performance through inclusive practices in organisational dynamics. Improved creativity, superior decision-making and higher levels of employee engagement that are contributions to richer discussions and innovative outcomes are among the benefits from gender diversity. Mousa et al. (2020) assert that happiness in the workplace and citizenship behaviour in the organisation are outcomes of gender diversity.

Employees can voluntarily assist the organisation in times of askance. This corresponds well with the idea that diverse teams eventually yield better ideas. It primarily draws from academic settings, thus limiting its benefits to other industries. Aminpour et al. (2021) have added that gender diversity offers a "diversity bonus" in enhancing collective intelligence, although their argument about general diversity does not consider gender-related mechanisms particular to a professional environment.

Constraints emerge from gender stereotypes and prejudices that inhibit cooperation, impede innovation, and produce barriers to the organisation working effectively. According to Andoh et al. (2022), diversity mismanagement results in the occurrence of conflicts and reduced satisfaction. Biases that affect team cohesion are cited by the authors within the broad arrays of diversities outlined. This takes a moral position away from overly optimistic perspectives by stressing the

negative outcomes while relying on self-reported data, which could introduce bias. Ridgeway and Correll's work, as referenced in similar instances, would emphasise cultural expectations shaping gender roles; Fine et al. (2020), however, criticise systemic imbalances that marginalise non-dominants. For justice-orientated approaches, the argument is that equality should be emphasised. Their emphasis on equity reveals a limitation in studies that perceive diversity as just a number, neglecting the aspect of power. Inclusive leadership and policies play very significant roles in increasing these benefits in such a way that all genders feel valued in a particular ecosystem of operation. Shore et al. (2020) mark inclusion as an organisational enabler to derive the full benefits of diversity; however, their model is not robust against resistance in traditional cultures. Ashikali et al. (2021) further extend this to link performance with inclusive practices, although it is fairly criticised as lacking empirical depth from non-Western contexts. A critical interrogation reveals an inclination to tout benefits, while challenges such as biases have become understated in literature dedicated to such positive results. The integration of inclusive leadership is seen as highly significant in this analysis to overcome such drawbacks.

Empirically, field studies show a strong relationship between gender diversity in the workplace and results concerned with engagement and innovation. According to Mousa (2021), data from academic institutions showed higher workplace satisfaction and retention tied to gender diversity to be a result of inclusive policies that encourage participation. Their findings suggest the improvement of engagement that could emerge from different types of interactions, but generalisability is hampered because the study was limited to the sector. Agu et al. (2024) found in the case of breweries in Nigeria that gender diversity increases efficiency and innovation from improved communication.

This sentiment agrees with local contexts, as diversity management helps to find solutions; however, the quantitative data failed to capture anecdotes of experiences provided

by the employees. Chaudhry et al. (2021) found that gender diversity promotes collaboration and decision-making in teams, ultimately leading to innovative behaviour across contexts. Their findings do lend support to the link with engagement since diverse groups tend to have higher levels of commitment, but the cross-sectional design of the research does not provide for causal inference. Studies such as those by Islam et al. (2024) show a departure from this trend, saying that diversity beliefs do not earn happiness without measurable returns and critiquing voluntary programmes that lack accountability.

Waghmare (2021) observed that gender-diverse teams in hotels develop empathy and collaboration between genders, facilitating innovation; nevertheless, the hospitality bias may not be true for other industries. Card et al. (2024) discuss how the language of organisation affects gender stereotyping, illustrating biases that percolate through hiring and on to engagement thereafter. This angle very much exhibits the contingency of equitable treatment; however, it is based on an experimental methodology that may not dock with the complexities of real life. Critically, these studies often focus on the positive correlations, neglecting potential confounding variables, such as organisational culture. According to Gharti and Modi (2024), leadership accountability is important in driving inclusion, although qualitative focus discounts large-scale empirical validation. The study here considers that the effect of gender diversity on engagement and innovation is moderated by inclusive conditions, putting a requirement for contextual adaptation.

Theoretically, there are lenses where theoretical frameworks understand how different symptoms of gender diversity affect all forms of engagement and innovation. In this discussion, the Resource-Based View (RBV) classifies gender diversity as a core differentiating resource that generates competitive advantage based on inimitable human capital. Feser (2022) applies RBV to argue that while attributes may be diverse, they will appreciate their value when integrated, which also enhances innovation using

complementary skills. The value is in keeping the idea that diversity is a long-term performance sustainer; however, criticism is levied against this as relatively static since environmental dynamic factors are ignored.

Ávila (2021) extended RBV by linking diversity with absorptive capacity; however, it gives insufficient consideration to gender-specific barriers of resource usage. Social Identity Theory claims that gender differences influence group dynamics, and identification with in-groups can either strengthen or diminish cohesion. Umeh et al. (2024) generalise this to ethnic contexts, but it would suggest that similar applications would hold for gender, where bias would tend toward the exclusion of individuals unless it were countered by such inclusionary practices.

Tajfel and Turner's (1979, as cited in several studies) foundation explains categorisation leading to stereotype formation; however, due to the pure psychological focus, it goes off from organisational applications given the absence of linkage with structural elements. Da Silva et al. (2024) talk about inclusion via a mediating lens. They also criticise the theory for not reflecting the power imbalances that exist between diverse groups. Relational demography theory discusses how people of different sex similarities or dissimilarities will influence interactions and bonds. As Tsui et al. (2022, cited in diversity literature) said, mismatches in demographic characteristics may reduce the level of commitment, yet evidence backing this claim differs, particularly when it comes to intersectional identities.

Malik (2023) critiqued the moderating effect of organisational culture in this context and stated that such a theory ignored the environmental influences on relations. A critical analysis shows that RBV dwells significantly on strategic value but pays very little attention to social processes, whereas social identity and relational demography deal with dynamics without sufficient integration of resources. For this comprehensive study regarding gender diversity's impact on organisations, interplay among these theories is considered necessary.

3. Methodology

A cross-sectional survey was carried out to assess gender diversity's influence on employee engagement and organisational innovation at the NIMPAT Group of Companies, Abuja, Nigeria. The survey was directed at employees in each of the departments, focusing on their perceptions of how gender diversity had an impact on engagement and innovation. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with Likert-scale responses to capture nuanced employee views. Stratified random sampling was used in this study to ensure that every gender group, male or female, was represented in the proportion reflecting the diversity of the workforce. The sample comprised 74 employees, which was calculated from the standpoint of the organisation's size and accessibility limitations to allow reliable statistical analysis (Agu et al., 2024). The study employed a regression model to analyse relationships, expressed as:

$$Y_1 = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \epsilon_1$$

and

$$Y_2 = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \epsilon_2,$$

where Y_1 represented employee engagement and Y_2 denoted organizational innovation (dependent variables), X_1 indicated gender diversity (independent variable), X_2 represented inclusive leadership (moderator), X_3 signified workplace inclusion (mediator), β_0 was the intercept, β_1 – β_3 were coefficients, and ϵ_1 , ϵ_2 were error terms. Multiple regression analysis was then performed to evaluate the dependency of the independent variables –

Table 1: Regression Analysis for Model 1

Variable	Coefficient (β)	p-value	Effect Size	R ²
Employee Engagement (Y_1)				0.35
Gender Diversity (X_1)	0.39	0.015	Moderate	
Inclusive Leadership (X_2)	0.33	0.022	Moderate	
Workplace Inclusion (X_3)	0.27	0.038	Small	

Table 2: Regression Analysis for Model 2

Variable	Coefficient (β)	p-value	Effect Size	R ²
Organizational Innovation (Y_2)				0.41
Gender Diversity (X_1)	0.45	0.008	Moderate	
Inclusive Leadership (X_2)	0.36	0.012	Moderate	
Workplace Inclusion (X_3)	0.30	0.029	Small	

The research findings confirmed the significant effect of gender diversity on employee engagement and inductive

gender diversity, inclusive leadership, and workplace inclusion – with respect to the dependent variables. In such instances, direct effects could be judged along with the leadership moderation and inclusion mediation roles, thus providing a wholesome framework to assess the impact of gender diversity within NIMPAT Group (Shore et al., 2020).

4. Result and Findings

Gender diversity emerged as a significant promoter of employee engagement and organisational innovation at NIMPAT Group of Companies under the auspices of inclusive leadership and equitable policies. Regression analysis yielded significant associations between gender diversity and employee engagement ($\beta_1 = 0.39$, $p < 0.05$), as well as organisational innovation ($\beta_1 = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$), with support for these relationships found testing with the modulating influence of inclusive leadership ($\beta_2 = 0.33$, $p < 0.05$ for engagement; $\beta_2 = 0.36$, $p < 0.01$ for innovation) and mediating effect of workplace inclusion ($\beta_3 = 0.27$, $p < 0.05$ for engagement; $\beta_3 = 0.30$, $p < 0.05$ for innovation). These models explained 35% of the variance in employee engagement ($R^2 = 0.35$) and 41% of the variance in organisational innovation ($R^2 = 0.41$), representing a moderately strong fit. Data collection was done from 74 employees, representing male, female, and non-binary groups, thus ensuring a diverse set of perspectives regarding gender diversity's impact.

innovation at NIMPAT Group of Companies, consistent with literature indicating the importance of different perspectives.

Contributions of diverse gender identities tend to use complementary approaches whereby women mostly create collaborative settings while men use competitive tactics together, driving the creativity and commitment (Buse et al. 2021). Teams with varied viewpoints were seen to yield novel and creative solutions, creating synergy.

However, challenges arose from gender stereotypes and unequal opportunities, which lessened collaboration when unattended. According to Ridgeway and Correll (2021), some cultural expectations and perceptions of women being less authoritative hinder teamwork, something which can be witnessed in cases of a certain kind of friction existing within the NIMPAT Group. Their limitation to a Western-centric view, however, restricts its applicability to the Nigerian patriarchal context, in which traditional norms heighten bias and require culturally targeted interventions. Their research fails to consider the collective factors that bar women from attaining these leadership roles, which might mitigate the benefits of diversity. Such inclusive practices as mentorship programmes and bias training were identified as being enhancers of the positive effect gender diversity receives by building an equitable environment to foster participation (Oluwatayo et al., 2024).

This study critiques Oluwatayo et al. by mostly evaluating HR practices and ignoring some systemic issues, for instance, resource disparities affecting the efficacy of inclusion. Most – if not all – of Nigeria's cultural gender norms are hierarchical and traditional in nature, thus requiring customised strategies for inclusion to be maximally effective, setting this apart from the usual global research which does not consider such contextual nuances (Shore et al., 2020). Thus, according to this study, inclusive leadership and context-specific strategies were found to strengthen this association of gender diversity with employee engagement and innovation.

5. Conclusion

Research shows that effective management of gender diversity brought about outcome-positive influence on employee engagement and organisational innovation at

NIMPAT Group of Companies and that strategic intervention induced such. Inclusive leadership coupled with equitable policy mechanisms caused mitigation of all forms of gender bias that could have been impediments to joint contribution by different gender identities with their perspectives meant to inflame creativity and commitment. On the other hand, women's collaboration strategies combined well with men's competition tactics as radiating toward innovative results, especially under mentorship and bias training practices.

The results were in alignment with those from global studies and Nigeria alike, stressing the point that gender diversity is an asset in strategy that bolsters the organisations' performance. Custom-tailored inclusion strategies were important here since Nigeria is culturally complex, in which traditional aspects of gender norms influence workplace dynamics. This was a position best suited for the NIMPAT Group through the sustenance of sex-particular competitive advantage in terms of diversity opportunities.

6. Recommendations

To realise all the benefits that gender diversity brings to the NIMPAT Group of Companies, it has been suggested that gender-inclusive mentorship programmes should be set up to facilitate collaborative efforts and knowledge transfer among different gender identities, thereby creating an environment that can work well together. Other recommendations to be developed into HR policies that would produce equitable opportunities for individual employees include flexible work arrangements and comprehensive bias training. These policies should increase employee engagement and fair treatment within the organisation. The recommendation was that regular audits of gender diversity take place to gauge employee perceptions of inclusion and possible improvements in practice, which would ensure that the diversity policies remain effective. Leadership training in managing gender dynamics would help strengthen team cohesion and drive innovation, thereby positioning NIMPAT Group to capitalise on gender diversity as a strategic asset for long-term success.

References

- Agu, P. C., Nwulu, C. S., Okeke, C. I., & Nwosu, I. A. (2024). Workforce diversity and employee performance: Evidence from selected Nigerian manufacturing firms. *International Journal of Business and Management Studies*, 12(3), 45–67.
- Aminpour, P., Gray, S. A., Singer, A., Scyphers, S. B., Jetter, A. J., & Jordan, R. (2021). The wisdom of crowds for improved disaster resilience: A case study of evaluating community flood resilience using collective intelligence. *Frontiers in Built Environment*, 7, 678127.
- Andoh, J., Awuku, E. Y., Quaye, I., Amankwah, I. A., & Antwi, T. (2022). Does workforce diversity influence firm performance? The mediating role of employee commitment. *Cogent Business & Management*, 9(1), 2111354.
- Ashikali, T., Groeneveld, S., & Kuipers, B. (2021). The role of inclusive leadership in supporting an inclusive climate in diverse public sector teams. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 41(3), 497–519.
- Ávila, L. V. (2021). Diversity as a competitive advantage: Leveraging differences in organizational human capital. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 42(4), 23–30.
- Barney, J. B., & Wright, P. M. (2021). On becoming a strategic partner: The role of human resources in gaining competitive advantage. *Human Resource Management*, 60(5), 771–790.
- Buse, K., Bilimoria, D., & Perelli, S. (2021). Gender diversity and firm performance: The role of inclusive leadership. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 170(4), 685–701.
- Card, D., DellaVigna, S., Funk, P., & Iriberry, N. (2024). Gender-neutral language and gender disparities in job ads. *American Economic Review*, 114(6), 1623–1658.
- Chaudhry, I. S., Paquibut, R. Y., & Tunio, M. N. (2021). Do workforce diversity, inclusion practices, and organizational citizenship behavior promote organizational performance? Evidence from the UAE public sector. *Cogent Business & Management*, 8(1), 1976844.
- Da Silva, C., Lopes, L. F. D., & Veiga, H. M. S. (2024). Inclusive leadership and organizational performance: The role of diversity management. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 45(2), 189–204.
- Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2020). Women and the labyrinth of leadership. *Harvard Business Review*, 98(3), 112–120.
- Feser, C. (2022). *Human capital as a source of competitive advantage: A resource-based view*. Routledge.
- Fine, C., Sojo, V., & Lawford-Smith, H. (2020). Why does workplace gender diversity matter? Justice, organizational benefits, and policy. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 14(1), 36–59.
- Gharti, P., & Modi, M. (2024). Workforce diversity and inclusion: A pathway to organizational success. *International Journal of Management Studies*, 11(2), 78–92.
- Hoobler, J. M., Masterson, C. R., Nkomo, S. M., & Michel, E. J. (2021). The business case for women leaders: Meta-analysis, research critique, and path forward. *Journal of Management*, 47(6), 1395–1423.
- Islam, M. R., Ali, M., & Jantan, A. H. (2024). Workforce diversity, happiness, and organizational performance: A study of Malaysian SMEs. *Journal of Workplace Behavior*, 9(1), 45–60.
- Krishnan, H. A. (2020). Gender diversity and organizational performance: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 41(5), 456–474.
- Malik, P. (2023). Diversity management and organizational culture: A comparative study. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 34(8), 1502–1525.

- Mousa, M. (2021). Does gender diversity affect workplace happiness for academics? The role of diversity management and organizational inclusion. *Public Organization Review*, 21(1), 119–135.
- Mousa, M., Massoud, H. K., Ayoubi, R. M., & Abdelgaffar, H. A. (2020). Gender, diversity management, and organizational citizenship behavior: A study of academics in Egyptian public business schools. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 6(1), 1786420.
- Oluwatayo, A. A., Adetoro, O. O., & Adegun, O. B. (2024). Gender diversity and employee engagement in Nigerian service firms. *African Journal of Management Studies*, 15(2), 89–104.
- Ridgeway, C. L., & Correll, S. J. (2021). Unpacking the gender system: A theoretical perspective on gender beliefs and social relations. *Gender & Society*, 35(4), 609–634.
- Shore, L. M., Cleveland, J. N., & Sanchez, D. (2020). Inclusive workplaces: A review and model. *Human Resource Management Review*, 30(2), 100733.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47). Brooks/Cole.
- Tsui, A. S., Egan, T. D., & O'Reilly, C. A. (2022). Being different: Relational demography and organizational attachment. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 37(4), 549–579.
- Umeh, C., Cornelius, N., & Wallace, J. (2024). Ethnic diversity and organizational performance: The mediating role of inclusion. *Journal of Management Studies*, 61(3), 876–900.
- Waghmare, Y. (2021). Workforce diversity and employee engagement in the hospitality industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 94, 102845.
- Zhang, Y., Liu, X., & Wang, H. (2020). Gender diversity and innovation performance: Evidence from Chinese firms. *Journal of Business Research*, 113, 232–241.