

Workplace Diversity and Employees' Performance in Selected Federal Universities in South-East Nigeria

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Abstract

The study is on workplace diversity on employees' performance in selected Federal universities in South-east Nigeria. Primary data were obtained through structured questionnaire made up of a sample population of 1,756 from the selected Federal Universities (1,252 for University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), 373 for Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUAAU) and 229 for Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike Ikwo (AEFUNAI) respectively). The study used descriptive statistics and linear regression to analyse data obtained. It was found that ethnicity/state of origin of respondents had significant effect on employees' performance. Also, the findings went further to reveal that surveyed employees who were of Igbo ethnic group statistically performed significantly higher than those from other ethnic groups. However, religion did not show any significant effect on employees' performance. It is recommended that the selected Federal universities (UNN, MOUAAU and AEFUNAI) should create room for a more inclusive recruitment policy which incorporates more ethnic groups and states in the scheme of things in order to trap innovative and creative ideas from them.

Keywords: Workplace diversity, employees' performance, creativity, innovation, federal universities.

Introduction

Workplace cultural diversity issues in the society really play out in the organisational setting and get compounded over time. In the Nigerian organisational setting, cultural diversity variables such as ethnicity, state of origin and religion interact to produce a workplace environment that might create more complexities. However, some other cultural diversity issues that may be observable in the workplace include race, culture, ethnicity, religion, language, beliefs, spiritual practice, and group norms (Rijamampinina & Carmichael, 2021; Mazur, 2014; Jackson & Joshi, 2011).

Section 14(3) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria mandates Federal institutions and agencies like universities to reflect the federal character of Nigeria in the employment of persons in order to promote national unity and command national loyalty (1999 Constitution). The 1999 constitution intends to ensure that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic groups or other sectional groups in Government agencies. Globalisation and advances in technology have also made it imperative for universities to hire people from various nationalities both as teaching and non-teaching staff. Besides, Articles 21(2) and 23(3) of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights among other things enshrined that everyone should have equal access to public service in his/her country and right to work, free choice of employment and favourable conditions (United Nations Organisation [UNO], 1948). These provisions, have no doubt, created categories in the university workplace that have meaning within specific national, organisational, ethnic, demographic, religious and cultural contexts. The global best practices recommend an inclusive

work environment that would create avenues for collaboration between persons, groups, and other organisations whether within or outside the nation's cultural milieu. White and Rice (2010) canvassed the concept of the inclusive work culture.

In Nigeria, religious diversity and perception of individuals in that regard complicate public service outcomes. It is not always easy to know whose religion and practices associated with it should be brought into the Nigerian Public Service scheme of things, thereby making it a sensitive issue in the Nigerian society. The pattern of location of Federal Universities and similar institutions in Nigeria are majorly influenced by the country's known diversity considerations namely, state of origin/ethnic diversity or Federal Character conception. Therefore, workplace diversity proves vital in harnessing the creative ability of workers, their cultural traits, as well as skills they employ to communicate with one another, thereby utilising them to achieve what gives competitive benefit to the organisation concerned (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart & Wright, 2018). This in turn, affects employees' commitment and performance. To manage workplace diversity would therefore imply getting the maximum derivable advantage which diversity portends while at the same time reducing to the barest minimum all the foreseeable hiccups which might include prejudiced attitudes that are capable of undermining an organisation's performance (Dessler, 2020). The thrust of this study is to examine the effects of workplace diversity, namely ethnicity, state of origin and religion on employees' performance in the selected Federal Universities in South-east Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The geo-ethnic configuration of Nigeria has influenced its public sector over the years. Nigeria has 374 identifiable ethnic groups with distinct cultural traits (National Population Commission, 2013). The country also has 36 states and 774 Local Government areas. Each of these groups or entities have peculiar features such as inhabiting a particular territory or zone, or a distinct mother tongue and culture indigenous to them. The University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUAAU) and Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Ikwo (AEFUNAI) workplaces where many of these groups are employed are known by distinctive group expressions, individual desires and interests, group motives and needs, as well as belief system, attitudinal orientations, value system, suspicions, fears of domination, and so on. There is adequate constitutional and Public Service regulations meant to accommodate Nigeria's ethnic/state of origin and religious diversities in the selected Federal Universities' workplace. White and Rice (2010) believed that if a work organisation succeeds in developing an organisational culture that cherishes the inputs made by different members in the workplace, efficiency in service delivery might occur. The extent to which the selected Federal Universities in South-East Nigeria manage their ethnic, state of origin and religious diversities successfully has serious impact on their employees' performance. The possibility of one group behaving in a way that might generate adverse impact on the chances of individuals belonging to certain groups from securing jobs is commonplace. This might reduce employment chances in the workplace and could jeopardise prospects for promotion and advancement (Barak, 2014). The implications of these workplace diversity problems on employees' performance in the selected Federal Universities are that performance of employees would be more likely affected, while some employees would prefer relocating to other universities. The University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike and Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Ikwo in South-east Nigeria are not insulated from employees' performance problems.

Researchers have carried out studies on workplace cultural diversity and employees' job performance using different locales or study areas as well as different indicators of the variables i.e. workplace diversity and employees' performance but none has been carried out in the

selected Federal universities in the South East Nigeria as well as making use of the indicators of the variables (creativity and innovation) contained in the study. Therefore, this study investigates the effects of workplace diversity on employees' performance in selected Federal universities in South-East Nigeria.

Research Questions

- i. What effect does workplace cultural diversity in the form of ethnicity and state of origin have on employee's performance in the selected Federal Universities in South-east Nigeria?
- ii. What effect does workplace cultural diversity in the form of religion have on employee's performance in the selected Federal Universities in South-east Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: Ethnicity and state of origin have no significant effect on employee's performance in selected Federal Universities in South-east Nigeria.

H₀₂: Religion has no significant effect on employee's performance in selected Federal Universities in South-east Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications

Workplace Cultural Diversity

According to Syed and Tariq (2017), diversity may include multiple issues such as gender, ethnicity, religion, age, sexuality, and disability and other peculiarities which make one person different from others. Barak (2014) was able to define global diversity in two ways. In the first perspective, diversity was explained with reference to the classification of the workplace into distinctive elements that have common perception among those belonging to known cultures or countries. This means that diversity should be understood in different ways in different cultural contexts. Following this view, an example of diversity in USA might include race or ethnic origin (Asian, African- American, Latino); or religious categories (Catholic or Protestant) in a place like Ireland or caste system in a place like India. The emphases are hinged on those categories that make understanding in various national and socio-cultural perspectives. Barak (2014) also gave a second definition of what she meant as global diversity to involve the identification of what constitutes mode of differentiation and the way they create limitations to employment opportunities and the form of discrimination experienced as a consequence.

Employees' Performance

Performance is one of the commonest organisational behaviours. According to Igbal, Ahmad, Haider, Batoool and Ain (2013) and Osah, Ojabo and Alagah, (2017) employees' performance involves synchronizing the objectives and goals of the organisation with expected targets of employees as affirmed and made measurable. Organisations make strategic plans where they outline their expectations, targets, and what will indicate performance. In the university system, it is evident that institutional vision, mission, and objectives are clearly stated and employees' performance hinge around the achievement of the same. Universities equally have their strategic plans, which are implemented and monitored or adjusted to assess growth rate and accomplishments of the institutions. Whatever the average employee does or fails to do have important bearing to an organisation's performance and achievement of its strategic plans. Performance behaviour represents the sum of the behavioural orientations connected to work which fall within what an organisation has expectation for its employees to show in the day-to-day discharge of their duties.

While employees' performance represents the behaviour of people in the workplace which is geared towards accomplishing organisation's goals and objectives, organisational performance on the other hand, means increasing an organisation's output or productivity (income, graduate output, research output, creativity and innovation) to meet its goals and objectives. Universities are known as no-for-profit organisations and their accomplishments should not be strictly measured like profit-making organisations. Thus, one can conveniently assert that employees' performance is a necessary condition for organisational performance to happen in any university. The above should help in proper conceptualisation of this study.

Ethnic/State of Origin Diversity and Employees' Job Performance

Ethnic diversity relates to diversity in language, religions, races and cultures while state of origin diversity relates to differences arising from peoples' state of origin. It has been opined that relationships in ethnically diverse societies are inevitably characterized by conflicts (Edewor, Aluko & Folarin, 2014). This manifests in form of competition for scarce resources. Most often, it is not easy to draw a distinction between ethnic manifestation and state of origin syndrome in Nigerian work organisations. This made Ojo (2019) to regard Nigeria polity as one of the most ethnically diverse societies in the World. Division and cleavages are created by individual employees especially in public sector organisations. The negative manifestations include communication problems, crises, injustice, inequality and religious and political instability (Odeyemi, 2014). It is, therefore, believed that ethnicity and state of origin have become a clog to the political and economic development of Nigeria while at the organisational level, it might degenerate from organisational clashes to personal and emotional conflicts. These will in turn affect employees' performance, morale and give rise to poor employee and organisational performance (Kathimba & Ayieni, 2018). Evidently, among the worrisome problems created by both ethnicity and state of origin in the workplace in Nigeria include being very loyal to one's ethnic group, antagonistic relations across cultures, hostilities and aggressive behaviour, bitterness, hatefulness, and lack of trust. According to them, the basic character of social relations is such that people may be accepted or reject based on their language and culture; discriminate against others in employment and show discrimination in areas like getting admitted into schools and universities as well as inter-ethnic marriages, social and business activities. Another school of thought however has it that individual employees from different ethnic groups and state of origin bring with them broadened viewpoints which may be advantageous to the organisation concerned (Ostegaard *et al*, 2011). They asserted that since innovation can result through interaction among workforce, the issue of communicating and interacting in the organisational setting could as well draw on the different qualities available at all layers of the organisation. Nevertheless, Ostegaard *et al* (2011) did not gloss over the fact that minority group members might have negative affective consequences such as low satisfaction with their job, absence of commitment, problems with identity and perception of discrimination. There is a close linkage between employees' performance and the performance of the organisation where they are engaged.

Religious Diversity and Employees' Performance

Religion is regarded as a very important element of cultural diversity which has great influence on the lifestyles, values and attitudes of the people (Ahmed, Shaft & Afta, 2014). It is believed that religious values and beliefs have serious effects on the way workers perform in the workplace (Heliot, Gleibs, Rousseau & Rojon, 2016). Gebert, Boerner, Kearne, Kim, Zhang, and Song (2014) observed that religious identity is mostly glossed over in the workplace thereby escalating conflicts. It is suggested that firms operating in countries characterised by religious diversity should adjust to bring in what the religion of their workers and customers

require. The organisations which ignore this might be exposed to different forms of negative outcomes such as workers' absenteeism, low morale, and low turnover.

According to Benefiel, Fry and Geigle (2014) religion and spirituality in the workplace have become prominent over the last few decades and have remained relevant. Evidently, organisational researchers have been examining the impact of religious beliefs and spiritual chemistry on employees' work outcomes (Messarra, 2014; Roundy, 2009). In simple terms, workplace spirituality focuses on the impact of religious beliefs on the way business organisations are managed (Benefiel, Fry & Geigle, 2014; Robbins & Judge, 2013). It was explained that the major concern of economists is the relationship between religion and economic performance of organisations. The arguments are however made both for and against different religions and their positive or negative contribution to economic development (Anderson, Bentzen, Dalgaard & Sharp, 2017). Furthermore, it has been observed that some religions demand that those who adhere to them should partake in diverse types of 'good works' or service (Roundy, 2009). Roundy (2009) went further to explain two main ways by which the faith people have in relying on their religion to render desirable (good) work usually affect how they get involved in the workplace. In the first place, as people take part in worship, it helps them remember that they owe a duty to render good works. In the second place, as such people get deeply religious and get greatly entangled with religious activities in their environment and organisational setting, they stress greater on their individual job performance as part of their spiritual worldview and transcendental realm than the mundane existence. Fry, Hannah, Noel and Walumbwa (2011) and Moon, Youn, Hur, and Kim (2018) argued that organisations that have accepted and cultivated the culture of spirituality reap the advantage of high productivity through their employees and thus maintain dominance in the market place. Employees in such organisations, they asserted, performed better. It is the individual employees that make their religion a factor that can influence their job performance.

Empirical Review

Abdulraheem (2014) examined the concept of managing or mismanaging workforce diversity and the determinants. The study dwelt on some issues relating to implementation of certain approaches of diversity management in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, with particular reference to Kwara State owned Polytechnic. The researcher used in-depth interview and secondary data. It was found that diversity in admission was managed through quota-based admission (40% got admission on merit; 30% on immediate catchment area; 20% for educationally disadvantaged areas and 10% on discretion). The findings show that use of quota in admission had made university admissions accessible and equal to many people but there was no evidence that it supported performance of students. On employment and promotion, it was found that individuals with good qualification were mostly dropped so as to employ individuals who hailed from other areas. It was concluded that the pursuit of quota system was counter to meritocracy and produces unhelpful effects on efficiency. The researcher also found that the institution studied had no independence to make its own plans and achieve strategic initiatives towards diversity management but implemented policies handed over to it by the government. It was recommended that performance should be determined by integrating skills from diverse groups.

Ehimare and Ogaga-Oghene (2011) studied the impact of workplace diversity on organizational effectiveness in the banking sector. Two hypotheses were proposed for the research. The first hypothesis predicted whether group of employees which have diverse demographics tend to perform less effectively while they work where competitiveness is allowed as a culture unlike in work situations which did not lay emphasis on competitive culture. Using regression analysis, it was found that there was no significant connection between the

effectiveness of an organisation and its culture moderated through competitiveness. The second hypothesis proposed that a labour force which is diverse in terms of its demographic content and follow development orientation has a higher probability to achieve its strategies effectively in contrast to the work situations which did not follow development orientation to its industry objectives. As it was with the previous hypothesis, they did not find empirical support as to how effective was the performance of diverse workers in a competitive cultural environment. In any case, the research revealed that a major correlation existed between some of the variables of diversity with the measures of organisational effectiveness. Furthermore, Ehimare and Ogaga-Oghene (2011) found a negative relationship between both employees output and offer of bonus while it was considerably positive in its correlation to performance. Besides, it was found that workers' diversities namely, sex, period on the job, and their ages have positive correlation and have significant relationship. The conclusion was that the moderating effect of labour force diversity on corporate efficacy in relation to existing workgroup situations is negligible. It was recommended that organisational leaders should not necessarily expect a straight affirmative connection between labour force heterogeneity and company efficacy. The strategic objectives which the company follows as well as the way the leadership and employees react to and administer the multiplicity of groups and individuals could make the difference.

Ostergaard *et al* (2011) made a study on the effect of employee diversity on innovation in some firms in Denmark employing above twenty workers. Data was drawn from a recent innovation survey and linked with dataset supplied by the firms. The study used econometrics to assess the linkages between workplace diversity and innovation. The research adopted societal differences like number of years, gender, ethnic group, and educational qualification. The regression result showed that educational diversity has the most positive association with innovation and closely followed by gender. On the other hand, age of persons was negatively associated with innovation while ethnic group did not have effect. It was concluded that diversity's effect on human capital should not be ignored. Since studies linking diversity to innovation is scarce, it was suggested that future researchers should go beyond demographic factors in order to unravel other factors having impact on human capital and firm's success.

Darwin and Selvaraj (2015) studied the effects of labour force diversity on employees' performance in some organisations in Singapore. The study aimed to examine the effects of workforce diversity on employees' performance in firms engaged in the manufacture of goods and services industries in Singapore. Questionnaire were distributed to a sample size of 316 employees. Three hypotheses were proposed in the study. The first hypothesis was that there existed no major relation involving age diversity and employees' performance; the second stated that there was no major association between gender and worker's output while the third stated that there was no major association between ethnic diversity and employees' performance. They found that age, gender diversity and ethnic diversity did not show any outstanding effect on employees' job performance in Singapore organisations. Darwin and Selvaraj (2015) quickly drew the conclusion that workers in Singapore organisations did not regard ethnic diversity as a critical factor in their job performance. They recommended a comparative study on the effect of workforce diversity on similar organisations operating in different countries to improve the depth of knowledge on the interaction of organization culture and national environment.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behaviour propounded by Tajfel and Turner (1979) and later expounded by Tajfel and Turner (1981). The theory of social identity is explained to be rooted in intergroup hostilities as well as presumption that groups

will compete among one another. In essence, competition is stimulated by anticipated benefits which, by all standard relates to what the affected groups perceive lie outside of their circumstance. Evidently, the groups who are in opposition compete intensely to obtain sufficient resources they are interested in while when their group interest conflicts, open societal collision might arise. Competitiveness among groups increases the level of intra-group self-confidence, solidarity, and collaboration. It would be seen that the Social Identity theory resonates with the intense struggles amongst various ethnic groups, and religious groups form different states of Nigeria to get greater advantage over others in employment opportunities in the selected Federal Universities in South-East Nigeria. There is inter-group competition and hostility which could manifest in one form of discrimination or the other in recruitment of employees in these universities. This theory is applied in this study to investigate how the diverse groups in the selected Federal Universities in South-East Nigeria co-operate among their in-groups or otherwise to accomplish institutional objectives.

Methodology

Data for the study were drawn from both primary and secondary sources. Structured questionnaire was used to elicit study participants opinions while key informants were reached through oral interviews. The researcher applied the purposive sampling technique to select 3 Federal Universities amongst five universities in the South-East geopolitical region. The researcher is familiar with the background of the selected Federal Universities as an employee in one of them and believes that the information collected would improve the outcome of the research. Predominant data collected are qualitative, thus choosing this method was purely anchored on researcher’s judgment that samples that would fairly represent the universities would be collected. The study population was 14,594. The sample size was drawn with a formula proposed by Watson (2001) to determine a sample size for greater precision when the population size is known as shown in Table 1. These gave 1,252 from University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), 373 from Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUAU), as well as 229 from Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu Alike Ikwo (AEFUNAI). These were assumed to be representative of all the five (5) federal universities in South-East, Nigeria. Data analysis was done with descriptive statistics and Generalised Linear Regression.

Table 1: Sample Size for each Institution based on Proportional allocation.

S/No	University	Population	$n_i = \frac{N_i * n}{N}$
1	UNN	9,857	$n_i = \frac{9,857 * 1854}{14,594} = 1252.2 \approx 1252$
2	MOUAU	2,932	$n_i = \frac{2932 * 1854}{14,594} = 372.5 \approx 373$
3	AEFUNAI	1,805	$n_i = \frac{1805 * 1854}{14,594} = 229.3 \approx 229$
Total		14,594	1854

Source: Adapted from NUC Statistical Digest, 2018.

Results of the Findings

Preliminary findings

Table 2: Distribution of socio-economic characteristics of the study participants

Variables	Categories				Total
		UNN	MOUAU	AEFUNAI	
Ethnic Group	Igbo	1062(89.9)	316(89.3)	182(82.4)	1560(88.8)
	Yoruba	37(3.1)	11(3.1)	17(7.7)	65(3.7)
	Others	82(6.9)	27(7.6)	22(10)	131(7.5)
Religion	Christian	1165(98.6)	350(98.9)	207(93.7)	1722(98.1)
	Muslim	16(1.4)	2(0.6)	11(5)	29(1.7)
	Others	0(0)	2(0.6)	3(1.4)	5(0.3)

Source: Computed by the Researcher from Field Survey Data, 2020

Decision Rule: $p < 0.05$ indicates significance

Table 2 showed that 88.8% of the study participants were Igbos, 3.7% were Yorubas, while 7.5% belonged to other ethnic groups. On the other hand, 98.1% were Christians, 1.7% were Muslims while 0.3% belonged to other religions. It was evident from the results that a predominant number of employees of the selected federal universities in South-East Nigeria were Christians. According to Nyemutu Roberts, *et al.* (2011), the Igbo ethnic group is dominant in the eastern part of Nigeria and Christianity is the dominant religion amongst them.

Hypotheses Testing

H₀₁: Ethnicity/state of origin has no significant effect on employees’ performance in selected Federal Universities in South-east Nigeria.

H₀₂: Religious diversity has no significant effect on employees’ performance in selected Federal Universities in South-east Nigeria.

Table 3a: Measure of overall effect of ethnicity, state of origin and religion on employees’ performance (creativity and innovation) in selected Federal Universities in South-East Nigeria

Parameter	Wald Statistic	Df	Sig.
Intercept	12091.794	1	<0.001
Ethnicity	158.537	2	<0.001
Religion	2.202	2	0.333
State	1598.412	24	<0.001
Likelihood Ratio (2013, p-value <0.001)			

Source: Computed by the Researcher from Field Survey Data, 2020

Decision Rule: $p < 0.05$ indicates significance

From Table 3a, the results showed that both ethnicity and state of origin had significant ($p < 0.05$) effect on employees’ performance, while religion did not register any significant effect on employees’ performance in the selected universities. Employees’ performance was measured in terms of creativity and innovation. Further computation was done on this in Table 3b below.

Table 3b: Generalised linear regression model on effects of ethnic diversity on employees' performance (creativity and innovation) in selected Federal Universities in South-East, Nigeria.

Parameter	B	Std. Error	p-value	
Intercept	19.362	1.1757	<0.001	
Igbo	2.408	0.3150	<0.001	
Yoruba	-3.600	0.3598	<0.001	
Others	RC	RC	RC	

Source: Computed by the Researcher from Survey Data, 2020

Note: RC=reference category.

Decision Rule: $p < 0.05$ indicates significance.

Table 3b is the continuation of table 3a but went further to detail which category of independent variables (ethnic group) that had the same and important effect on creativity and innovation in the universities studied. The category with "RC" is referred to as reference category. The variable category with $p < 0.05$ indicated a significant difference from the reference category (RC). For instance, for ethnicity which had three categories (Igbo, Yoruba and Others), the reference category is "others". The category "Igbo" and "Yoruba" had significant ($p < 0.05$) effect on employees' performance.

Table 3c: Generalised Linear Regression Model on effects of workplace cultural diversity (ethnicity, state of origin and religion) on employees’ performance (creativity and innovation) in selected Federal Universities in South-East Nigeria.

Parameter	B	Std. Error	p-value
Intercept	19.362	1.1757	<0.001
Igbo	2.408	0.3150	<0.001
Yoruba	-3.600	0.3598	<0.001
Others	RC	RC	RC
Christian	0.238	0.50s50	0.638
Muslim	-0.141	.5374	0.793
Others	RC	RC	RC
Abia	0.569	1.1097	0.608
Anambra	1.862	1.1102	0.094
Ebonyi	1.321	1.1128	0.235
Enugu	1.020	1.1095	0.358
Imo	1.831	1.1094	0.099
Rivers	5.678	1.0886	<0.001
Delta	5.060	1.0902	<0.001
Edo	8.579	1.0808	<0.001
Akwa Ibom	5.015	1.0984	<0.001
Osun	6.771	1.0314	<0.001
Benue	2.866	1.0783	0.008
Kogi	3.625	1.0308	<0.001
Plateau	-1.600	1.4593	0.273
Yobe	8.779	1.4792	<0.001
Borno	6.779	1.4792	<0.001
Bayelsa	4.400	1.2765	0.001
Ekiti	8.645	1.0379	<0.001
Kwara	2.379	1.1837	0.044
Cross River	2.900	1.2765	0.023
Ogun	5.761	1.0727	<0.001
Kano	4.400	1.2765	0.001
Kaduna	2.400	1.4593	0.100
Lagos	1.379	1.4380	0.338
Ondo	8.189	1.2316	<0.001
Oyo	RC	RC	RC

Source: Computed by the Researcher from Survey Data, 2020

Note: RC=reference category. Decision Rule: p<0.05 indicates significance.

Based on the result of the regression model on the effect of workplace ethnic diversity on employees’ creativity and innovation in table 3b at 5% level of significance and since the regression coefficients for ethnic group was significant (p<0.05), the null hypothesis (H₀₁) was

rejected and the alternate hypothesis (H_{a1}) which states that ethnic diversity has significant effect on employees' performance (creativity and innovation) in selected federal universities in South-East, Nigeria was accepted. Besides, the content analysis of interview results of key officers of the selected federal universities point to the fact that the ingenuity of employees from diverse ethnic groups in the workplace is highly exploited to innovate new ideas. It was believed that creative employees from diverse ethnic backgrounds do not hide innovative ideas from others. This was seen as a very important factor towards better employees' performance and lends credence to the result of the regression analysis reported above.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that ethnic group and state of origin of individual employees had positive effect on employees' performance in the selected Federal Universities in South-East Nigeria. Employees are enabled to associate and share ideas with others for improved performance. Persons from other states and ethnic groups perceived that their universities gave them equal opportunities as it relates to recruitment of employees. This indicates that the selected universities have fair employment policies. Generally, state of origin and ethnic group affected employees' performance (creativity and innovation) positively. Additionally, it was found that employees who were of Igbo ethnic group showed higher performance in the universities studied. This is a novel finding. It would seem that employees' in the selected universities in South-East Nigeria, which the data revealed that 88% were from the geopolitical zone, strive to achieve significant degree of performance (creativity and innovation) to keep these universities located within their zone on top reckoning. The institutions might have registered in their views as part and parcel of their own dividend of democracy from the Federation which must be seen to be doing well in terms of achieving their mandate. Similarly, Kyalo and Gachunga (2015) found significant relationship between employees' performance and people's customary practices, cultural orientations, value system, languages and ethnic origin in the banking sector in Kenya. Rasul & Roger (2015) also found that ethnic group diversity of government civil service bureaucracies in Nigeria positively correlated with their employees' performance. This result, however, contradicted Darwin & Selvaraji (2015) who found that ethnic diversity had no statistical significance in job performance in Singaporean organisations and Kowo & Akinbola (2018) who discovered that ethnic diversity had no significant impact on workers output in Stallion Group of Companies, Lagos. However, religious diversity did not have any significant effect on employees' performance. It is evident that religion, though a very sensitive matter in Nigeria, did not register positively as an important factor for job performance amongst employees of the selected universities. This result was in line with Mecho (2016) who reported that employees' religious beliefs negatively affected employees' job outcome in Oil Libya Petrol Stations in Kenya.

Conclusion

As the selected Federal Universities exploit the workplace diversities of their employees for good, it would unleash talents and skills for greater research initiatives and innovative technologies and services. Thus, the more diversity is encouraged in the Federal Universities, the more the opportunity for workers to associate to achieve their organisational goals. However, religious background of employees had no major effect on employees' performance in the selected universities. Since ethnicity/state of origin influenced employees' performance positively in their duties, any conscious effort to achieve a much more inclusive workplace by these universities, would elicit significant commitment from their employees. It is recommended that employees from diverse ethnic groups and states of origin should be hired to harness their contributions towards innovations and creativity in Federal Universities.

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