

Chapter 54

Impact of Workplace Diversity on Employee Performance: A Case of Some Selected Private Universities in Ghana

Juliana Serwaa Andoh

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4766-2469>


*Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and
Technology, Ghana*

Benjamin Ghansah

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1599-6301>


Data Link Institute, Ghana

Joy Nana Okogun-Odompley

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2286-3291>

Data Link Institute, Ghana

Ben-Bright Benuwa

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3085-706X>

Data Link Institute, Ghana

ABSTRACT

The authors explore how the milieu of workplace diversity affects the relationship between employee and performance. In particular, we theorize and empirically examine the moderating effects of four (4) categories of diversity context variables: age, gender, ethnicity, and educational background. The authors perform analyses on 175 out of 320 respondents consisting of academic and administrative staff of four selected private universities in Ghana. The results showed, for example, that workplace diversity has an overall influence on employee performance, however, educational diversity has more effect on employee performance in the universities compared to the other competing variables used in this study. Age and educational diversity had a significant impact on employee performance in the universities whilst gender and ethnicity diversity had no influence on their performance. We discuss future research directions regarding diversity, workgroup context, and performance outcomes and outline some recommendations for administrators and university leaders.

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1. INTRODUCTION

With the world that is changing or revolving constantly, diversity management has become a popular term used in modern society and management practice. Many organisations around the world have developed policies that aim to promote and manage diversity. Diversity management refers to the voluntary organizational actions that are designed to create greater inclusion of employees from various backgrounds into the formal and informal organizational structures through deliberate policies and programs (Hays-Thomas, 2004; Kaiser & Prange, 2004; Nyambegera, 2002; Özbilgin, Mulholland, Tatli, & Worman, 2008; Palmi, 2001; Shifnas & Sutha, 2016).

Emuze and James (2013) are of the view that organisations which adopt diversity as a source of innovation, growth and development are more likely to show behavioural support and facilitate its implementation with greater focus, persistence, and effort. With respect to current realities threatening organisations today, it might be concluded that workforce diversity may create opportunities or pose challenges to the workplace (Osita-Ejikeme; Ugwuzor, 2014). In a Nation like Ghana with various ethnic nationalities and dialects, as well as different social and religious backgrounds, the subject of diversity in the workplace, particularly among groups, cannot be over emphasized. The study therefore seeks to find out the relationship between workplace diversity and employee performance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of Diversity

According to Green, López, Wysocki, and Kepner (2002) cited from Esty, Griffin, and Hirsch (1995), diversity is defined as recognizing, accepting, accommodating, appreciating, and celebrating differences among people with reverence to age, class, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, race, sexual orientation, spiritual practice, and public assistance status whilst Naqvi, Ishtiaq, Kanwal, Butt, and Nawaz (2013) defined diversity as the existence of a workforce in which personalities come from different socio-cultural and religious backgrounds.

Workplace diversity is similarly defined as intergroup relations, which play out alongside one another in communication and interaction. It develops a host of complexities related to diversity (Brouwer & Boros, 2010). Lee and Gilbert (2014) further clarified that workforce diversity based on age, gender and ethnicity cannot be viewed in a similar way as workforce diversity that is based on organisational roles and individual aptitudes.

Roberge, Lewicki, Hietapelto, and Abdyldaeva (2011) was of the opinion that managing a diverse workforce is complicated and thus needs organisations' total attention in terms of implementing proper and clear practices that will enhance the performance of the organisation in the short and long term. In addition, Mahadevan, Primecz, and Romani (2014), explained that dysfunctional workforce diversity management arises due to lack of communication between management and employees on how workforce diversity benefits the organisation.

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