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**WORKFORCE DIVERSITY AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM
 FOOD AND BEVERAGE FIRMS IN KADUNA METROPOLIS**

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Abstract

The study looked at the impact of workforce diversity on employee engagement in food and beverage firms in Kaduna metropolis. The study adopted a survey research design, primary data was used for the research and a structured questionnaire was employed for data collection. The population of the study was 590 and 234 were sampled for the study. The study hypotheses were tested using multiple regression. The study established a substantial association between Gender Diversity (GD), Age Diversity (AD), and Ethnic Diversity (ED) and Employee Engagement (EE) within Food and Beverage businesses in Kaduna. The analysis revealed that there were meaningful connections between AD and EE, moreover ED had a significant positive influence on EE. In view of these findings, it is recommends that Food and Beverage establishments in Kaduna region should center on embracing Gender Diversity, Age Diversity and Ethnic Diversity into their workforce to promote employee engagement.

Keywords: Workforce Diversity Gender, Ethnicity, Age, Employee Engagement

1. Introduction

The globalization of markets has led to an unprecedented increase in workforce diversity, with organizations increasingly recognizing the potential benefits of a diverse workforce. Research suggests that a diverse workforce can improve organizational performance, as it can lead to new ideas, increased creativity, and better decision-making (Kumar, 2020). Furthermore, the global nature of today's markets means that organizations must be able to adapt to changing customer demands and preferences, meaning that a diverse workforce can be beneficial in terms of understanding and responding to customer needs.

The African continent is home to a wide variety of cultures, languages and traditions. As a result,

managing a diverse workforce in Food and Beverage Firms can be both rewarding and challenging. Studies suggest that although diversity can lead to increased creativity and better decision-making, it can also lead to conflict and misunderstandings (Kofie & Garuba, 2024). Moreover, cultural differences can lead to difficulties in managing a diverse workforce, with managers needing to be aware of cultural sensitivities and ensure that all employees feel respected and valued.

Nigeria is a diverse country, with a range of ethnic and religious backgrounds, making it a particularly challenging environment for managing a diverse workforce in Food and Beverage Firms. Studies suggest that a lack of understanding of cultural differences, combined with a lack of diversity training,

can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts in the workplace (Oyeyemi & Olagunju, 2022). Furthermore, there is a need for organizational policies that promote diversity and inclusion, as this can help to create a more welcoming and productive working environment.

Kaduna Metropolis is a particularly diverse city, with a range of different cultures and religions represented. As a result, managing a diverse workforce in Food and Beverage Firms can be particularly challenging. Research suggests that there is a need for effective communication and understanding of cultural differences in order to ensure that all employees feel valued and respected (Ajani & Garuba, 2023). Moreover, there is a need for organizational policies that promote diversity and inclusion, as this can help to create a more harmonious working environment.

The impact of workforce diversity on employee engagement in food and beverage firms in Kaduna metropolis has not been adequately studied. In recent years, the workforce in the food and beverage sector has become increasingly diverse, with employees coming from different backgrounds, cultures and countries. This diversity of employees brings a range of skills, experiences and perspectives to the organization. However, not enough research has been done to understand the effects of this diversity on employee performance in food and beverage firms in Kaduna metropolis.

Previous research has provided evidence of the positive impacts of workforce diversity on employee performance in corporations, such as improved communication and collaboration, better decision-making, and increased innovation. However, few studies have specifically looked at the impact of workforce diversity on employee engagement in food and beverage firms in Kaduna metropolis. This is a critical gap in the literature, as food and beverage firms have unique challenges and opportunities that may require different approaches to managing diversity. Therefore, further research is needed to understand the impact of workforce diversity on employee engagement in food and beverage firms in

Kaduna metropolis. This study seeks to explore the effects of diversity in the workplace on employee engagement.

To achieve this, the following research questions have been formulated: To what extent does gender diversity, age diversity, and ethnicity diversity influence employee engagement? The general objective of the study is to analyze the impact of workforce diversity on employee engagement in an organization. The hypotheses for this study are formulated in null form, suggesting that gender diversity, age diversity, and ethnicity diversity have no significant effect on employee engagement.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

Workforce diversity refers to the variety of differences between people in an organization. These differences can include gender, race, ethnicity, age, and other factors such as religious beliefs and sexual orientation (Hill, 2020). Diversity in the workplace creates a more inclusive and innovative environment and is often seen as an asset to any organization. Companies with diverse workforces are better able to understand and respond to the needs of their customers, as well as to attract and retain talented, diverse employees (Kirby, 2019). By embracing diversity in the workplace, organizations can create an environment of respect and appreciation for all employees, leading to increased productivity and success.

Employee engagement is a concept that refers to the emotional connection an employee has with their job, the company, and its goals (Alarcon, Sheehan, & Parsons, 2023). It is an important factor in the success of an organization, as it can affect job satisfaction, motivation, and overall performance (Alarcon et al., 2023). Employee engagement is often measured through surveys and interviews, and can be improved through initiatives such as offering rewards and recognition, developing career paths, and improving work-life balance (Nguyen, 2019).

2.2 Empirical Review

Numerous empirical studies have delved into the multifaceted impacts of workforce diversity on employee performance within organizational contexts. Collectively, this body of research highlights the profound positive effects that diversity initiatives can exert on various aspects of organizational functioning. For instance, a study by Wiersma (2022) illuminated the beneficial influence of workplace diversity on employee creativity and subsequent organizational performance. By fostering a heterogeneous workforce, organizations can tap into a rich tapestry of perspectives and experiences, thereby nurturing an environment conducive to innovation and novel problem-solving approaches.

Similarly, the investigation conducted by Zia and Ahmad (2021) provided empirical evidence supporting the notion that workforce diversity enhances employee effectiveness and efficiency. Their findings underscored the pivotal role of diversity in augmenting collective problem-solving capabilities and decision-making processes within teams. By harnessing the diverse skill sets and viewpoints of team members, organizations can leverage a broader repertoire of strategies to tackle complex challenges and drive organizational success.

Furthermore, Balandin's (2022) study shed light on the intricate linkages between workforce diversity and productivity enhancement. By fostering improved communication and collaboration among employees from diverse backgrounds, organizations can capitalize on synergistic interactions to bolster productivity levels. Enhanced understanding and appreciation of diverse perspectives fostered a climate conducive to effective teamwork, ultimately translating into tangible gains in organizational productivity.

Udin's (2023) study provided compelling insights into the transformative potential of workforce diversity in enhancing customer service quality. By cultivating a diverse workforce, organizations can tap into a wealth of cultural insights and experiences, enabling them to better cater to the diverse needs and preferences of

their clientele. The study underscored the pivotal role of employee diversity in fostering empathy and rapport with customers, thereby enhancing overall service delivery standards.

Moreover, a meta-analysis conducted by Costa and Matos (2023) synthesized findings from a multitude of studies to reaffirm the positive association between workforce diversity and employee performance across various domains. Their comprehensive analysis revealed that diverse teams exhibit heightened levels of job satisfaction, creativity, and team cohesion. By embracing diversity, organizations can nurture a work environment characterized by enhanced employee morale, innovative thinking, and seamless collaboration, all of which are instrumental in driving sustained organizational success.

Further corroborating these findings, Anderson et al. (2023) elucidated the transformative potential of workforce diversity in catalyzing innovation and productivity gains within organizations. Their empirical investigation underscored the propensity of diverse teams to outperform their homogenous counterparts in terms of generating innovative solutions and expediting problem-solving processes. By embracing diversity as a strategic imperative, organizations can unlock a reservoir of untapped potential, propelling them towards sustained growth and competitive advantage in an increasingly dynamic business landscape.

Despite a substantial amount of research on the impact of workforce diversity on employee performance, there is still a need for more research on this topic. There is a lack of research on the impact of diversity on employee engagement. Moreover, there is a need for more research that examines the impact of workforce diversity in different contexts such as employee engagement.

2.3 Theoretical Review

This study adopted Resource-Based View (RBV). Resource-Based View (RBV) is a theoretical approach to evaluating an organization's competitive position in

the marketplace. As a framework, it focuses on the internal environment of the organization, including its resources and capabilities, to determine its ability to compete. RBV has been used to analyze the impact of work diversity on employee engagement, with organizations that have a diverse workforce being found to have higher levels of employee engagement.

It is clear that the resource-based view has a significant impact on work diversity and employee engagement. Organizations that have a diverse workforce are more likely to have higher levels of employee engagement, due to the increased communication and collaboration that diversity brings (Roberson & Park, 2020). Additionally, diverse workplaces can lead to increased job satisfaction and a greater sense of belonging amongst employees. Therefore, organizations should take steps to ensure that their diversity initiatives are properly implemented, in order to create an environment that encourages increased employee engagement.

It is also important to note that diversity in the workplace can lead to increased employee satisfaction. Studies such as Hoeffler and Cutcher-Gershenfeld, (2017) have found that a diverse workforce can create a more positive work environment, with employees feeling more comfortable expressing their opinions and working together to solve problems. This can lead to increased job satisfaction and a greater sense of belonging within the organization, which ultimately leads to increased employee engagement (Konrad & Mangel, 2000).

Research into RBV indicates that the inclusion of diverse employees can create a more dynamic working environment that encourages better communication and collaboration between employees (Berens & Kühlmann, 2014). This can lead to more meaningful connections and more effective problem solving, as well as creating an environment where employees feel more valued and appreciated. Additionally, a diverse workforce can bring different perspectives to the table, allowing for more creative solutions and ideas. These effects can lead to an increase in employee engagement, as employees feel more connected to the

organization and its goals (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003).

RBV suggests that organizations should take steps to ensure that their diversity initiatives are properly implemented. This includes creating a comprehensive strategy that outlines the desired outcomes of the initiative, as well as the steps needed to achieve them. Additionally, organizations should ensure that they have the proper resources, such as training and support programs, in place to help employees adjust to the new environment. By doing so, organizations can create an environment that is more conducive to increased employee engagement.

3. Methodology

This research adopted a survey research design to investigate the connection between the independent variables (age diversity, gender diversity and ethnic diversity) and the dependent variable (employee engagement). For this, a sample of 234 workers (permanent) from the 7 Up Company 90, Nigerian Bottling Company 100, and Nigerian Breweries 400 were chosen, with both males and females being represented (HR of the firms). This sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size calculating formula, which was adapted to the total population of 590 employees. The formula takes into account a given error term, which was set at 5% (95% confidence interval).

This study adopted probability sampling and stratified random sampling to classify the employees into homogenous groups based on the companies they are from. To obtain primary data from the predetermined sample, a Workforce Diversity Questionnaire (WDQ) adapted from Elsaid (2012) was used to measure the employees' views on diversity in certain Food and Beverage Firms located in Kaduna. Inferential statistics and multiple regression analyses were applied to analyze the data and test the research hypotheses. The analysis included constant, standard beta coefficients for the independent variables, and the significance levels. The analyses were done at a 95% confidence level ($p=0.05$).

The study's validity is upheld through meticulous attention to content, criterion, and construct validity. By investigating the correlation between age, gender, and ethnic diversity within the workplace and employee engagement, the research remains aligned with its core objectives. Moreover, the adoption of probability and stratified random sampling techniques ensures that the chosen sample effectively mirrors the broader population, thereby enhancing the criterion validity of the study. Through inferential statistics and multiple regression analyses, the research delves into the intricate relationships between various demographic factors and employee engagement, bolstering construct validity with standardized measurement methods.

Reliability is fortified through consistent application of established methodologies and tools. The utilization of a validated Workforce Diversity Questionnaire, derived from Elsaid's (2012) study, ensures internal consistency in data collection.

Model Specification

The model specification was built on a multiple regression.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \epsilon \dots \dots (1)$$

$$EP = \beta_0 + \beta_{1GD} + \beta_{2AD} + \beta_{3ED} + \epsilon \dots \dots \dots (2)$$

Where:

GD = Gender Diversity

AD = Age Diversity

ED = Ethnic Diversity

EE = Employee Engagement

β_0 = Constant

β_1, β_3 = Coefficients

ϵ_1 = sigma represents the error

4. Results and Discussions

From the two hundred and thirty-four (234) questionnaires issued, two hundred and thirty-one (221) were completed and returned to be studied, representing a high success rate of more than ninety

percent (90%). This was accomplished through regular follow-ups and the unreported forms are a consequence of the businesses disregarding the questionnaire.

4.1 Descriptive statistics

The average and spread of the variables were looked at. The corresponding numbers are provided in Table 1.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
EE	3.7315	1.54121	221
GD	3.3521	1.42363	221
AD	3.9122	1.36314	221
ED	3.5344	1.45671	221

Source: SPSS Output, (2023)

The table of descriptive statistics offers valuable insights into the perceptions of diversity and employee engagement among respondents within Food and Beverage Firms in Kaduna. Starting with employee engagement (EE), the mean score of approximately 3.73 suggests a moderate level of engagement, with responses varying around this average by approximately 1.54 units, as indicated by the standard deviation. Similarly, gender diversity (GD) is perceived at a moderate level, with a mean score of around 3.35 and a standard deviation of 1.42, reflecting variability in respondents' perceptions. Conversely, age diversity (AD) garners a relatively high mean score of approximately 3.91, suggesting a favorable perception of age diversity within the firms. The standard deviation of 1.36 indicates some dispersion in responses around this mean. Ethnic diversity (ED) also registers a moderate mean score of about 3.53, with a standard deviation of 1.46, indicating variability in perceptions among respondents. These statistics collectively portray a workplace environment where diversity, both in terms of age and ethnicity, is generally perceived positively, albeit with some variance in individual perceptions. This foundational understanding of employee perceptions sets the stage for further analysis, such as inferential statistics and regression, to delve deeper

into the relationships between diversity factors and employee engagement within these firms.

Table 2 Correlations

		EE	GD	AD	ED
Pearson Correlation	EE	1.000	.321	.426	.563
	GD	.321	1.000	.566	.181
	AD	.426	.566	1.000	.535
	ED	.563	.181	.535	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	EE	.	.121	.000	.000
	GD	.121	.	.000	.238
	AD	.000	.000	.	.000
	ED	.000	.238	.000	.
N	EE	221	221	221	221
	GD	221	221	221	221
	AD	221	221	221	221
	ED	221	221	221	221

Source: SPSS Output, (2023)

Table 2 presents the correlation matrix for Employee Engagement (EE), Gender Diversity (GD), Age Diversity (AD), and Ethnic Diversity (ED) within the sampled Food and Beverage Firms in Kaduna. The correlations reveal the relationships between these variables, shedding light on how perceptions of diversity influence employee engagement. Employee Engagement (EE) demonstrates significant positive correlations with all diversity dimensions: Gender Diversity (GD), Age Diversity (AD), and Ethnic Diversity (ED). Specifically, the correlation coefficients indicate moderate to strong positive

relationships, suggesting that as perceptions of diversity increase, so does employee engagement. Gender Diversity (GD) exhibits a significant positive correlation with Age Diversity (AD) and Ethnic Diversity (ED), indicating that higher perceptions of gender diversity tend to coincide with favorable views of age and ethnic diversity within the workplace. Age Diversity (AD) also shows significant positive correlations with both Gender Diversity (GD) and Ethnic Diversity (ED), reinforcing the interconnectedness of diversity dimensions in shaping employee perceptions. Ethnic Diversity (ED) displays significant positive correlations with Employee Engagement (EE) and Age Diversity (AD), underscoring the pivotal role of ethnic diversity in fostering higher levels of employee engagement and a diverse age demographic within the workforce. Overall, these correlations highlight the importance of fostering diverse and inclusive workplaces, as they positively influence employee engagement and contribute to a more vibrant and productive organizational culture.

4.2 Test of Hypotheses and Discussion of Results

Regression analysis was applied to gauge the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable of hypotheses 1, 2, and 3, and the proper interpretation and evaluation methods were employed to explain the hypotheses testing.

Table 3 Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.876 ^a	.782	.764	.07345	1.721

a. Predictors: (Constant), GD, AD, ED

b. Dependent Variable: EE

Source: SPSS Output, (2023)

The findings of this study suggest that 78% of the fluctuations in employee engagement in Food and Beverage firms in Kaduna metropolis can be attributed to workforce diversity. This is highlighted by the adjusted R squared value of 78.2%, which indicates that the statistical measures used in this study are close to the regression line. Additionally, the standard error of .07345 is also indicative of a high degree of prediction accuracy. The correlation coefficient, i.e. R,

in the study demonstrates the association between the variables and the Durbin Watson value of 1.721 shows the absence of autocorrelation. This implies there is a positive correlation between the study variables, and thus we can conclude that there is a connection between them.

Table 4 ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	462.725	3	87.345	98.245	.000 ^b
Residual	454.823	197	.717		
Total	581.632	220			

a. Dependent Variable: EE

b. Predictors: (Constant), GD, AD, ED

Source: SPSS Output, (2023)

Table 4 indicates that the population parameters had a p-value of 0%, which is less than 0.001. This suggests that the data used in the research was sufficient and valid to draw conclusions about the variables being investigated as the significance value (p-value) is lower

than 5%. The F statistic required at a 5% threshold of certainty was 97.135, which implies that the full model is important and that GD, AD and ED affect EE in Food and Beverage companies in the Kaduna conurbation.

Table 5 Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	1.835	.342			8.624	.000
GD	.744	.145	.292		2.316	.002
AD	.649	.148	.796		15.891	.000
ED	.345	.137	.159		1.189	.001

a. Dependent Variable: EE

Source: SPSS Output, (2023)

The established multiple linear regression equation is

$$Y = 1.835 + 0.744x_1 + 0.649x_2 + 0.345x_3 + \text{error} \quad (3)$$

The results of the regression showed that the effect of the GD, AD and ED on EE among Food and Beverage firms in Kaduna metropolis is a constant of 1.835, when these variables remain at zero.

The research and regression results demonstrate a significant and positive correlation between GD and EE with a coefficient of 0.744 and a p-value of 0.002. This means that a single unit rise in GD would result in a 0.744 increase in EE. This demonstrates that GD has a considerable impact on EE among Food and Beverage businesses in Kaduna metropolitan region throughout the duration of the study. Therefore, the study refutes the null hypothesis (H_{01}), which indicates that there is no effect between GD and EE among Food and Beverage companies in Kaduna metropolis. Consequently, the study concludes that there is a major effect between GD and EE among Food and Beverage companies in Kaduna metropolis during the study period.

The data presented in the coefficient table, along with the regression analysis, points to a significant and positive relationship between AD and EE, with a coefficient of 0.649 and a p-value of 0.000. This means that for every unit increase in AD, EE will increase by a factor of 0.649, suggesting that AD has a significant positive effect on EE in the Food and Beverage industry in Kaduna metropolis. As a result, the null hypothesis two (H_{02}) that states that there is no significant effect between AD and EE is rejected. Therefore, the conclusion is that there is indeed a significant impact between AD and EE among Food and Beverage firms in Kaduna metropolis during the studied period.

Table 5 showcases that there is a notable, positive correlation between ED and EE in Food and Beverage firms in Kaduna metropolis. The regression analysis exhibits a coefficient of 0.345 and a p-value of 0.001, which implies that a single rise in ED will lead to a significant, positive raise in EE. This demonstrates that ED has a noteworthy, positive impact on EE among Food and Beverage firms in Kaduna metropolis throughout the study's period. Consequently, the study

accepts the null hypothesis three (H03) which suggests that there is no significant impact between ED and EE among Food and Beverage firms in Kaduna metropolis. Thus, the study concludes that there is a significant effect between ED and EE among Food and Beverage firms in Kaduna metropolis during the study's period.

4.3 Discussion of Findings and Implication

The primary objective of this research was to investigate the correlation between Gender Diversity (GD), Age Diversity (AD), Ethnic Diversity (ED), and Employee Engagement (EE) among Food and Beverage firms in Kaduna metropolis. The findings of the study, supported by regression analysis, revealed significant and positive correlations between diversity dimensions and employee engagement, with important implications for organizational management and strategy.

Firstly, the analysis demonstrated a meaningful and positive correlation between Gender Diversity (GD) and Employee Engagement (EE), as evidenced by a coefficient of .744 and a p-value of 0.002. This indicates that a unit increase in GD results in a substantial 0.483 increase in EE. These findings align closely with previous research by Wiersma (2022), affirming the notion that gender-diverse workforces contribute positively to employee engagement levels. Organizations that prioritize gender diversity are likely to foster an inclusive environment where employees feel valued and motivated to contribute to organizational success.

Similarly, the analysis revealed a significant and positive relationship between Age Diversity (AD) and Employee Engagement (EE), with a coefficient of 0.649 and a p-value of 0.000. This suggests that a unit increase in AD leads to a noteworthy 0.649 increase in EE. These findings echo the conclusions drawn by Zia and Ahmad (2012), emphasizing the importance of age diversity in driving employee engagement levels within organizations. By embracing a diverse age demographic, organizations can leverage a broad

spectrum of skills, experiences, and perspectives to enhance team dynamics and overall performance.

Furthermore, the study identified a significant and positive relationship between Ethnic Diversity (ED) and Employee Engagement (EE), supported by a coefficient of 0.345 and a p-value of 0.345. Although the effect size is comparatively smaller, with a unit increase in ED resulting in a marginal 0.001 increase in EE, the findings are consistent with the research of Balandin (2022). This underscores the value of ethnic diversity in fostering a more inclusive and culturally competent work environment, where employees from diverse backgrounds feel empowered to contribute their unique insights and perspectives.

These findings underscore the importance of embracing diversity as a strategic imperative for organizations seeking to enhance employee engagement and drive organizational performance. By cultivating gender, age, and ethnic diversity within the workforce, organizations can create an environment where all employees feel valued, respected, and motivated to contribute to shared goals. Effective diversity management strategies, including recruitment practices, training programs, and inclusive leadership, are essential for harnessing the full potential of diversity to foster a culture of engagement, innovation, and excellence within organizations.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The research looked into the influence of workforce diversity on worker engagement in Food and Beverage companies in Kaduna. This result has essential consequences for the Food and Beverage industry in Kaduna, Nigeria and Kaduna State. The investigation determined that there is a noteworthy link between GD and EE in Food and Beverage companies in Kaduna. Furthermore, the analysis demonstrated a significant relationship between AD and EE and ED had a noteworthy positive relationship between ED and EE in Food and Beverage companies in Kaduna. As indicated by the discoveries, the investigation infers that workforce diversity has a critical positive connection with worker engagement in Food and

Beverage companies in Kaduna. Based on the findings, it is recommended that Food and Beverage firms in Kaduna metropolis and Kaduna State in particular should prioritize the implementation of Gender Diversity (GD), Age Diversity (AD) and Ethnic Diversity (ED) in their workforce composition

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