

**MODELLING GENDER DIVERSITY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH EMPLOYMENT
OPPORTUNITIES IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract:

Gender equality in the workplace adds value to a company's bottom line due to the different viewpoints and background of diverse individuals. Gender diversity represents a more equal proportion of men and women. The paper looked at Gender Discrimination and employment Opportunities in Nigerian manufacturing companies. The study employed survey research design, the instrument of Likert scale questionnaire and multiple regression analysis as methods of investigation. The paper discovered that gender has a positive and significant effect on employment opportunities, age and educational level are a significant predictor of employment opportunities, educational level. The work recommended that organizations should continue to promote equal employment opportunity of carrier growth for all genders, encourage employment made-up of different age group and ensure that people with right mixture of qualification are employed based on their individual qualification.

Keywords: Gender equality, manufacturing companies, gender discrimination, age, educational level and employment opportunities.

Introduction

Variety is a spice of life is a general axiom that has been a guide to daily living. Most times, human resource manager(s) are faced with the task of managing diverse personalities within their organization. Globally, the business case for opportunities shows that employment management is where employers recognize value to include women and men of different ages, abilities, ethnic origin, religion or sexual orientation in order to make good business sense (Dahlin, Weingart, & Hinds, 2015). Managing diverse employment opportunities and promoting inclusion also forms part of the business world's strategic agenda as a response to a more diversified society, customer base, market structure and overall business environment and workforce, where knowledge and innovation are critical in securing competitive advantage in a globalized economy.

One of the most aching challenges confronting Nigeria today is the issue of unemployment. It has become so severe that policy-makers, parents and youths, especially graduates alike are having sleepless nights over it. The issue has been in the front burner of national discourse in recent years. The unemployment question is even aggravated by the increasing number of graduates being churned out annually by tertiary institutions made up of Universities, Polytechnics, monotechnics and Colleges of Education, about 322 in all excluding Technical Colleges (Educational and Employability Survey Report, 2019).

Ajiboye, Oyebanji and Awoniyi (2019) noted that unemployment is the share of the labour force that is without work but available and seeking employment. It could also be seen as an economic condition in which individuals seeking jobs remain unhired (Eurpstat, 2013). The rate of unemployment in Nigeria has assumed an alarming dimension. It had steadily risen from 21% in 2010 to 33.3% in 2020, though the economy has been growing in an average of 2.1% per annum (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

More worrisome is the problem of graduate employability, which has rendered many Nigerian graduate unemployable. This is because, while it is one thing for tertiary institutions to produce graduates, it is another for the products of these schools to meet up with employers' requirements, skills or competences for employment. Employers of labour often complain that some of these graduates though professionally or technically qualified are unemployable, in that they lack the requisite, essential skills or competencies needed in the job or for sustainable employment. These skills create a gap in their knowledge which must be filled to make them suitable to compete for few, existing vacancies that crop up from time to time (Sodipo, 2014). Eurosat (2019) noted that employability is about having the capability to gain initial employment, maintain employment and obtain new employment if required. For the individual, employability depends upon: assets in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes; the way these assets are used and deployed; presentation of assets to potential employers and the context within which the individual works, e.g. labour market and personal circumstances. Knight and Yorke (2019) consider the concept of employability to be a 'synergic combination of personal qualities, skills of various kinds and subject understanding.' Employability skills denote characters that may make an individual attractive to potential employers (Babalola, 2019). These skills and competencies are directly linked to the needs of the labour market and the mandatory inclusion of employability skills in higher education has been proposed in some countries. It has been proven that these employability skills promote performance in the workplace. Harvey (2019) defined 'employability skills' in terms of four key areas: (a) Traditional intellectual skills - e.g. critical evaluation, logical argument (b) Key skills - communication, IT, etc., (c). Personal attributes - motivation, self-reliance and (d) Knowledge of organisations and how they work.

Statement of the Problem

Creating employment opportunities is one of the major challenges facing both developed and developing countries in the world, and employment opportunities problem is more critical in developing countries. Unemployment is also a severe problem in Africa especially in sub-Saharan regions. The rate of unemployment is increasing from time to time due to increasing the change of conditions for who are unemployed over the change of total active population. According to ILO, figures, sub-Sahara Africa region has the highest rate of unemployment (18.4%) after the Middle East and North Africa (21.3%). Creating employment opportunities has increasingly come to be recognized as one of the critical development challenges of many countries in the continent (Curtain, 2014). Unemployment is still a severe problem not only in Nigeria, but also in all countries in the world. To strengthen this, Bell and Okoye (2019), noted that currently, creating employment opportunities is a critical concern to almost every country in the world. It is one of the most pressing economic and social problems confronting Nigeria whose labour market have weakened substantially.

In spite of measures adopted by decision makers and managers of companies over the years in Nigeria to strengthen the creation of employment opportunities, the number of unemployed and employable individuals

is still on the rise. This is the problem this study seeks to investigate and to find out the determinants of employment opportunities in Nigeria, using Seven up Bottling Company, FCT, Abuja as a study. In addition, previously, different studies have been done on the determinants of employment opportunity in other study areas. But the studies conducted by Regina and Dashon (2017), Neda and Jegak (2019) and Ajayoi (2017) did not explain all the proxies that this study is using. Thus, this study primarily focuses on determinants of employment opportunities in Nigeria not explained by different researchers so far.

Research Question

Based on the above stated problem, the study is determined to answer this research question:

i. What effect does education level or background have on employment opportunities in Seven-up Bottling Company, Abuja?

Conceptual Framework

Gender Equality

Gender equality in the workplace is the equal treatment and acceptance of both males and females in an organization (Kumudha and Raji, 2018). Gender adds value to a company's bottom line due to the different viewpoints and backgrounds of diverse individuals. Gender diversity is when a company is represented by a more equal proportion of men and women. More companies are realizing the value of having a gender unbiased workforce (Kumudha and Raji, 2018).

Powell (2011) defined gender as the physiological inference of a someone being either male or female, like expectations and beliefs regarding what kind of attitudes, behaviours, values, knowledge, skills, and interests' areas are more suitable for or typical of one sex than the other. The study of gender focuses on how individuals believe that males and females differ. These gender variations influence the manner in which individuals react to the behaviours of others in the work settings or any other group coalition. Gender diversities are visible in prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination.

According to Connell (2012), gender refers to a description of masculinity or femininity. He resource-based view of the firm to argue that gender diversity at the management and organizational levels can provide a firm with a competitive advantage. Gender-based inequities in organizations, are reinforced and justified by stereotypes and biases that describe positive characteristics and therefore a higher status to the males.

The term "gender" refers to economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female (UN-Habitat, 2016). In almost all societies, women and men differ in their activities and undertakings, regarding access to and control over resources, and participating in decision-making. Riley (2019) identified gender as a social institution, cultural construct and power tool. According to Ostergaad (2012), the term 'gender' refers to qualitative and interdependent character of women's and men's position in society. On the other hand, Sex refers to the biological state of being male or female. There is a danger to confuse "gender" with "women". Sen (2000) posited that the concept of gender is not limited to the male or female species, but goes further to assess the relations between them as is constantly being renegotiated in the context of changing political, economic, social and cultural environments at the local, national and supra national levels.

Gender relations refer to a complex system of personal and social relations of domination and power through which women and men are socially created and maintained and through which they gain access to power and material resources or are allocated status within society (Alasdair, 2019). Gender is about men and women. Men and women are not the same: they are not equal nor will they ever be, due to physical and biological conditions. According to Jacobus (2016) even today the women's position or 'social status within in the society is different from that of men as shown by part of the feminist theory. The women are looked down upon as weaker sex while men are considered as saviour. Similarly, Butler (2010) explains that this is one of the major reasons why women are still oppressed in some parts of the world. This means that i social

situations like the past the females are still considered lower than the males when it comes to the social acceptability criteria. The Gender differences theorists also believe that gender differentiation also exhibits itself within household including how the work in the household.

Age Discrimination

Age discrimination is a shared phenomenon that is present in nearly all groupings, such as families, higher institutions, sport teams, and work or team groups with members of varying ages (Kunze, Boehm & Bruch, 2013). They explained that workforce is unique in its generational diversity, which presents new challenges to organizations attempting to attract, retain, manage, and motivate quality employees. Each generation believes that its strengths are unique and they do not enhance those of other generations (Rowe, 2010). Where age diversity is practiced, the benefits accrue both to the organization and the employees. Having an age diverse environment produces and creates better working relationships and enhances social cohesion for all.

Companies have to adjust to an aging population in various ways. Today's diverse workforce reflects generational differences and differing perspectives about the relationship between age and ability or professional worth. While complaints about age discrimination are not as prevalent as complaints about gender and racial discrimination, managers must still promote awareness and understanding of age differences in the workforce. Firms are not effectively utilizing the talents of old workers due to false assumptions and stereotypes that they are expensive, more prone to health problems, can't adapt to workplace changes and new technology, perform poorly in comparison to their younger employees and are a poor return on training investment (McGregor & Gray 2012; Taylor 2013),

Educational Background

Educational background could be seen as the type of formal training or education or even career that a person has acquired over the years. Daniel (2015) discovered that different types of education and levels of education expect different mobility rates. For instance, there are various occupations that are available for different sets of people. The type of occupation that is available for someone who has gained some years of work experience but does not have a university degree in a course of study is different from the one who has the required certificate from the university. Based On Daniel's findings, a person's productivity depends on the level of education he/she has acquired. Tracy and David (2011), discovered that organizations and employers usually refuse to employ whom they perceive lacks the adequate education, training, knowledge, skill, experience or expertise to fill up a position within the organization.

Most organisations implement educational diversity initiatives to motivate and encourage employees to work effectively with others so that organisational goals are achieved (Tracy & David, 2011). A person's educational background can be a significant indicator of their knowledge, skills, and capability (Tracy & David, 2011). Furthermore, the choice of a specific educational major may reflect one's cognitive strength and personality (Daniel, 2015). For instance, an individual educated in computer science can be expected to have a somewhat different cognitive disposition than an individual educated in marketing or advertising (Daniel, 2015). As in functional expertise, educational diversity seems to have a positive impact on team performance because it fosters a broader range of cognitive skills (Horwitz, 2010). Lewin, Massini and Peters (2011) contend that the absorptive capacity of the organization is likely to increase with variety in knowledge structures as reflected in diverse educational majors.

According to Akinwunmi and Adeyanju (2011), education is a priceless asset of fundamental value to the individual and the society. It provides a sound basis for individuals to develop their potentialities. It is a powerful instrument for effecting national development. It is a dynamic instrument of change. The wealth of nation is determined to a large extent by the quality as well as the quantity of its human resources that ultimately set the pace for the social, economic or political development of a nation. Education attainment

refers to the type of academic credentials or degrees an individual has obtained. Education level is a continuous variable but frequently captured as a categorical measure in empirical studies (Akinwunmi & Adeyanju, 2011).

Empirical Reviews

Age diversity and Employment Opportunities

Darwin (2014) focused on the perception of employees about the effect of the age diversity towards employment opportunities. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the views of employees in both manufacturing and service industries in Singapore. The Cronbach's alpha value of the survey was 0.708. The empirical relationship of age of the employees with employment-opportunities was computed using SPSS package. The analysis reveals that there is a negative relationship between age group of employees and their employment opportunities. The author failed to conduct pre-estimation analysis such as correlation and descriptive analysis. These would have helped made the analysis and findings more robust for policy making.

Maja, Ivica- and Marijana (2017) studied the influence of firm's age on its employment opportunities in developing countries. The study performed dynamic panel analysis based on a sample of 956 firms operating in Croatian food industry during the 2005-2014 period. The result of the analysis showed that age negatively affects employment opportunities. As firms get older, benefits of their accumulated knowledge in all aspects of the business (technology, supply channels, customers relations, human capital and financing costs) become overcome with their inertia, inflexibility and ossified by accumulated rules, routines and organizational structure. Beside firm's age, other firm-specific factors influencing employment opportunities of the firms operating in Croatian food industry include size, liquidity and solvency. The study did not explain in-depth how their results and tie them to findings.

Florian, Stephan and Heike (2019) investigated the effect of organizational level age diversity on collective employment opportunities perceptions of age discrimination climate that in turn should influence the collective affective commitment of employees, which is an important trigger for overall company performance. In a large scale study that included 128 companies, a total of 8,651 employees provided data on their perceptions of age discrimination and affective commitment on the company level employment opportunities. Information on firm level performance was collected from key informants. They tested the proposed model using structural equation modelling (SEM) procedures and, overall, found support for all hypothesized relationships. The findings demonstrate that age diversity seems to be related to the emergence of an age discrimination climate in companies, which negatively impacts overall employment opportunities through the mediation of affective commitment. The study failed to tie findings to previous studies and didn't state the applications used.

Edwinah and Nwuche (2020) examined the effect of age on employment opportunities in the Nigerian banking industry. A total of 388 managers were randomly drawn from a population of 13,339 managers of all the 24 banks in Nigeria. The instruments used for data collection were questionnaire and oral interview. A total of 320 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and analyzed. Spearman's Rank Correlation Statistical tool was used to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed that age is significantly related to corporate culture and organizational employment opportunities. The analysis would have accompanied the research instrument used and these are missing in the study,

Lee and Bose (2015) carried out an exploratory examination on the effect of age diversity on employment opportunities and employee service delivery in two (2) public sector organizations in Ogun State. The authors adopted survey research design and multiple regression analysis. The result of the study revealed that age diversity within one organisation was a positive factor when the firm was pursuing a employment opportunities and growth strategy. This is because the age diversity improved tremendously due to

employment opportunities and the increase in the service delivery of the employees. Findings from the study were note based on empirical reviews made.

Gender and Employment Opportunities

Qaiser (2019) examined the relationship between board gender diversity and its effect employment opportunities in Pakistan. He used empirical data on KSE 100 Index firms in 2008 to 2010. Data analysis was conducted through descriptive statistics such as percentages, means and standard deviation and inferential statistics - correlation and regression analysis using the Statistical Package for social Sciences (SPSS). Twenty Five percent (25%) Of the sample firms had at least one woman in the boardroom and only 3.33% of the CEOs are female. In order to investigate the rapport of gender diversity in board on firm performance, two. stage least-squares estimation was used, using Economic Valued Added (EVA) as the performance measurement technique. The results indicate that there was no significant relationship between board gender diversity on firm performance in Pakistan. The study is very . weak as it lacks the ingredients to make the study acceptable such as scope, research design employed and tools of analysis used in the study. Hafiza and Faiza (2015) assess the impact of a gender towards employment opportunities with focus on the education sector. The research was done by distributing 100 questionnaires to the faculty members of 5 different universities of Karachi. Data analysis was conducted through descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation and inferential statistics used both correlation and regression analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The questionnaire outcomes show that there was a significant impact on employment opportunities with the adoption of gender diversity in the workplace in the education sector. The study failed to 'state how the findings of the result was arrived at and this makes the study to be very weak.

Naima (2016)' wondered to know 'if gender has a direct effect on employment opportunitie effectiveness and what barriers women face during •their professional career growth. The pap was an exploratory research to highlight different types of factors that affect organization effectiveness and on the true reasons that push women back from proceeding to middle and t management Positions in organizations. In depth and structured interviews of top-level managers and focus groups of middle-level managers were conducted to a convenient sample with the aim of knowing their attitudes and behaviour towards role of gender in employment opportunities and to recognize its implications for mental block and stereotyping against female at workplace. The study found that gender bias has an effect on women attaining certain managerial positions in organisations. The scope of the study was not mentioned, the tools of analysis used and how it was derived was not stated, but went straight to findings without tying it to previous studies of the study and this makes the study a bit confusing.

Bhargava and Anbazhagan (2019) investigated the different employment opportunity levels of workers in Chittoor Sugar factory located at the Chittoor town of South India. It also studied how age and gender influence the performance levels of the workers in the firm using regression technique. The study found that the two variables under investigation have their direct effect on the employment opportunities of the workers to varying degrees. Workers in the medium age range, perform better compared to those on the extremes. Gender was also found to have its influence on employment opportunities and the female workers are relatively more opportune to get employed. The scope was stated, but failed to mention whether e-views or stata or any other econometric statistical tool were employed.

Ajayi (2017) examined the influence of demographic variables of gender and age on the employment opportunities of employees in the Nigerian civil service. Data for the study we obtained through 567 valid questionnaire containing information on gender-, age-, and two related issues from civil servants purposively selected from six states in the South-West, Nigeria

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to analyse data. Findings indicate that the age groups of the civil servants are critical to their employment opportunities in the organisation. The findings indicate that

employment opportunities in the civil service organisation are higher for the younger and older civil servants than those within the middle age groups. The study did not explain in-depth how their results came about but the scope and research instrument were clearly stated and the different econometric tools that were used for the study.

Daniel, Patrick, and Eric (2020), in their study concluded that gender discrimination against men and women based on their ethnic, religious and geographical identity is common. The survey, however, focuses on discrimination against women on the basis of gender and employment opportunities in government universities in Lagos State, Nigeria. The OLS regression model used for this study was developed and tested in which one hundred and eighty-seven copies of the questionnaire that were administered to respondents as completed by the academic staff of government universities in Lagos State were retrieved. Pearson correlation and regression were utilized for the analysis of the study, and the result showed that managerial roles based on gender discrimination against women in government universities in Lagos State affects employment opportunities negatively. The scope was stated, OLS and apriori expectations, but failed to mention whether e-views or stata or any other econometric statistical tool were employed.

Result of Data Analysis

The result of data analysis revealed that education level or background has a significant effect on employment opportunities. This was captured by the t-value of 4.95562 and an associated p-value of 0.0001 which was found to be less than the 0.05. Therefore, the study rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that Educational background has significant effect on employment opportunities in seven-up bottling company, Abuja.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from the study showed that gender has a positive and significant effect on employment opportunities. The implication of this result is that the right mixture of male and female employees (devoid of biasness) has a positive and significant influence on employment opportunities and how the employees discharge their duties. The findings revealed most of the employees enjoy working with their fellow colleagues of opposite gender hence improving performance. The significant relationship between gender and employment opportunities also meant that some employees like to work with opposite gender so long as they can carry out their job professionally. This is in-line with the study conducted by Hafiza and Faiza (2015) whose outcomes showed that there was a significant impact on employment opportunities with the adoption of gender equality in the workplace in the education sector. Michael (2017) study also revealed that there is a strong and positive relationship between gender equality and the employment opportunities of employees at Nigerian Breweries Plc, Enugu. Gender was also found to have a Positive influence on employment as the female workers are relatively more Productive according to the study of Bhargava and Anbazhagan (2014).

Conclusion

It could be discovered from the study that companies that create equal employment opportunities and have a good mix of male and female employees is more likely to perform better than an organization that is dominated by same gender. Reason being that both genders think and acts differently and if an organization embraces such diversity, then it is indirectly welcoming different ideas that the male and female employee will display. The study also showed that an age is a significant determinant for employment opportunities and creates an atmosphere in which each generation brings in a variety of skill sets important in problem solving and meeting of objectives. Educational background portrayed a significant relationship with employment opportunities mainly because most of the employees reported that they work in departments that utilize the skill set they learned in higher learning institutions. Therefore, their level education is a key contributor to employment opportunities of employees at the Seven-up bottling company. The more educated individuals are, the better their employment opportunities and they perform on the job. The findings suggests

that education equips individuals with a comparative advantage to better employment opportunities and perform better on certain tasks that require those innate skills acquired through tertiary education. The study thus concludes that age, educational level, and gender are significant of employment opportunities; thus, showing that they have a positive and significant effect on employment opportunities in seven-up bottling company, Abuja.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were raised:

On gender, seven up bottling company should continue to promote equal employment and opportunity for career growth for all gender. They are encouraged to practice gender equality and not been gender bias when it comes to work related activities. They should play a key role at ensuring equal opportunities (free , of gender bias) are provided when offering trainings, workshops and seminars so as to sustain the operational efficiency of workers.

On age categories, seven up bottling company management should encourage employments made up of different age groups. The younger employees are more skilled when it comes to handling high business technologies e.g. webcasting, social networking, etc., this are skills that if shared, can boost employment opportunities of both groups of employees and organization as a whole because the company will be able to serve its customers better with such technologies. The older employees are known to have more interpersonal skills and more traditional business skills. If these skills are shared, the organization will be able to build a stronger communication and customer relationship and increase customer loyalty. This shared knowledge can enhance the employment opportunities at seven up bottling company of both group of employees.

On educational level or background, the management of seven up bottling company should ensure that people with right mixture of qualifications are employed based on what they studied. This will help motivate others seeking employment openings for various job positions in the company.

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