

Effect of Workplace Diversity and Inclusion on Institutional Performance in Selected Public Higher Education Institutions in the Gambia

^{1*} Mohammed Jebou, ² Gibriel Badjie

Department of Management, Faculty of Economics & Management, University of The Gambia, Gambia.

mjebou@utg.edu.gm, gbadjie@utg.edu.gm

*corresponding author

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Abstract

Research aim: This study aimed to examine the effect of workplace diversity and inclusion on the performance of public higher education institutions in The Gambia.

Design/Method/Approach: A correlational research design was employed, using quantitative methods to collect data. Structural equation model (SEM) was adopted in addressing the hypothesis using Smart PLS. The study has 92.4% response rate.

Research Finding: In general, the findings indicate that Workplace Diversity and Inclusion has a positive effect on the performance of Public Higher Education Institutions in The Gambia. Likewise, the result of the study also indicates that Workplace Inclusion and Organizational Culture were found to have positive effects on Organizational Performance, while Workplace Diversity was also observed to have a positive influence on Organizational Culture. However, it was discovered that there is a negative relationship between Workplace Inclusion and Organizational Culture.

Practitioner/Policy implication: The study underscores the importance of prioritizing Workplace Diversity and Inclusion management for senior executives in public higher education institutions thus, emphasizes the need for clear communication channels to align diversity and inclusion management objectives with institutional goals.

Keywords: Workplace Diversity, Workplace Inclusion, Organizational Culture and Organizational Performance.

1. Introduction

One of the key drivers of a nation's economy is higher education institutions, which also facilitate employment and considerably advance national development while boosting productivity through quality human capital. The development and management of diverse employees in higher education institutions in The Gambia continue to undergo significant change because of the new worldwide academic transformation that the 21st century has brought with it, (MOHERST, 2014). Advance education institutions have realized that the kind of individuals, skills, and structures that bring achievements are continuously changing while catching up with the growing global academic revolution.

The Gambia's Education Sector Policy (2016 – 2030) distinguishes the prerequisite to focus on improving criterions of educational significances. It highlighted accessible, impartial and comprehensive quality education for sustainable development as the key thrust of the policy. In view of the above, The Government of the Gambia has strengthen its commitment towards promoting a multicultural society and holds that every Gambia citizen, regardless of their racial, ethnic, religious, or physical heritage, deserves the chance to fully

contribute to the country's progress (MOHERST,2014).

Diverse and comprehensive demographic characteristic of employees in higher education institutions is important in achieving the organizational goal and it's increasingly recognized as essential to improving organizational performance and it is a necessity that organizations can no longer ignore (Nair & Vohra, 2015). An organization that practices the notion of diversity and inclusion, and implement a comprehensive organizational culture improves employees commitment, satisfaction, efficiency and overall organizational performance vice versa (Solke, 2021).According to Kaur and Arora (2021), the effective adoption of strategies aimed at embracing diversity and promoting inclusivity can greatly enhance an organization's performance and productivity. Having a diverse workforce in an organization can foster creativity and innovation, leading to better problem-solving and decision-making abilities, which in turn can enhance productivity, performance, and the reputation of the organization. Fahmi and Saudah, (2015) suggest that managers in organizations encounter difficulties in creating and implementing a culture that values diversity and inclusivity, while also enhancing the skills and dedication of their employees.How workplace diversity and inclusion are managed and supervised within an organization positively or adversely impact organizational productivity (Saxena, 2014). If workplace diversity and inclusion are monitored and control effectively, it will result in better-quality decision making, greater inventiveness and high performance (Maingi, 2015)

1.1. Statement of Problem

The Household Census Report of 2013 from the Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS) highlights glaring workplace diversity and inclusion inequalities at the organizational level in The Gambia. These disparities extend across various dimensions such as education level, age, gender, employment status, inclusion of differently-abled individuals, and overall involvement in the workforce. The report emphasizes that male individuals, both youth and elderly, play a more dominant role in the economic development of The Gambia compared to their female counterparts. Subsequent labor force reports in 2018 reveal a workforce gender imbalance, with 64.8% of the employed population being males and 36% females.

Despite the growing acknowledgment of the advantages of workplace diversity and inclusion, higher education institutions in The Gambia grapple with creating truly inclusive environments. Collinson et al. (2018) note that ethnic, religious, and linguistic differences pose formidable challenges to achieving social harmony and inclusion in the country's higher education institutions. As The Gambia strives for development, addressing these disparities is crucial for fostering an inclusive environment that harnesses the diverse talents of its workforce and propels the nation toward educational excellence and advancement.

1.2. Research Objectives

The core purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of workplace diversity and inclusion on the performance of public higher education institutions and mediating role of culture in selected public higher education institutions The Gambia. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- a. To assess the effect(s) of workplace diversity on performance of public higher institutions.
- b. To analysis the effect(s) of workplace inclusion on performance of public higher institutions.

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- c. To evaluate the mediating role(s) of organizational culture on workplace diversity and inclusion on performance of public higher education institutions.

2. Method

The study adopts a quantitative approach with a correlational research design to explore the relationships between workplace diversity, workplace inclusion, organizational culture, and organizational performance within public higher education institutions (PHEIs) in The Gambia. The primary objective is to evaluate the interconnectedness of these variables and provide empirical insights into how they affect organizational outcomes. Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires, including both online surveys and face-to-face interviews. A total of 277 questionnaires were distributed among academic and administrative staff across PHEIs, ensuring a proportional representation. Prior to the main data collection, a pre-test was conducted at two higher education institutions to ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. The instrument was further refined based on feedback to enhance clarity and relevance. The reliability and validity of the constructs were tested using Smart PLS 4, with reliability measured through Cronbach Alpha and construct validity assessed using composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE). Following Lee et al. (2017), a reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is deemed acceptable, and an AVE of 0.5 or more indicates that the construct explains over half of the variance in its items (Edeh et al., 2023). The study obtained the following reliability metrics: workplace diversity (Cronbach Alpha = 0.827, Composite Reliability = 0.837, AVE = 0.530), workplace inclusion (Cronbach Alpha = 0.878, Composite Reliability = 0.916, AVE = 0.669), organizational culture (Cronbach Alpha = 0.775, Composite Reliability = 0.779, AVE = 0.535), and organizational performance (Cronbach Alpha = 0.713, Composite Reliability = 0.738, AVE = 0.449). While the AVE for organizational performance was slightly below 0.5, the reliability of the instrument was considered satisfactory overall, and the pilot study led to adjustments in the questionnaire to ensure more precise responses.

The study defines workplace diversity as demographic differences among employees, such as age, gender, physical abilities, and education levels, within public higher education institutions. Workplace inclusion refers to employees' engagement in decision-making, access to communication and resources, and opportunities for career growth. Organizational culture is defined as employees' perceptions of organizational policies, fairness, work environment, participation, and responsibilities. Organizational performance was measured by factors such as market share, graduate employment, program completion rates, student/staff ratios, and external reviews of institutional reputation. The questionnaire was designed using a 5-point Likert scale, following the model of Ohunakin et al. (2019), with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

In terms of hypotheses testing, the research focuses on examining the relationships between workplace diversity, workplace inclusion, organizational culture, and organizational performance. Without explicitly presenting hypotheses, the analysis explores whether workplace diversity and inclusion positively affect organizational performance, whether there is a positive correlation between organizational culture and performance, and how diversity and inclusion influence organizational culture. These relationships were analyzed using Smart PLS 4, and the results offer valuable insights into the effects of diversity and inclusion on organizational outcomes in Gambian PHEIs. A monochrome flowchart depicting the relationships between the study variables accompanies the research model to visually represent these connections.

3. Results and Discussion

Discriminant validity results

To ensure discriminant validity, various criteria were assessed, including the Fornell-Larcker criterion, cross loadings, and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) (Mor & Kundu, 2017). The Fornell-Larcker criterion compares the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each variable with the correlation of latent variables. In this study, as shown in Table 1, the square root of AVE for each variable surpassed the correlation of latent variables, indicating compliance with the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Cross loadings were also examined to confirm that each indicator's loading was higher than the loadings of indicators for other variables. Based on Table 2 it can be observed that the cross-loading criterion was met. According to Hanafiah (2020) the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criterion of less than 0.85 should be met for discriminant validity. Table 3 shows that HTMT criterion was satisfied establishing discriminant validity. In summary, the study successfully fulfilled the criteria for discriminant validity through the Fornell-Larcker criterion, cross loadings, and HTMT analysis. These findings provide confidence that the variables and constructs under investigation are distinct from each other, further supporting the validity of the study's measures.

Table 1: Fornell-Larcker Criterion Results

	Organizational Culture	Organizational Performance	Workplace Diversity	Workplace Inclusion
Organizational Culture	0.748			
Organizational Performance	0.224	0.709		
Workplace Diversity	0.322	0.202	0.740	
Workplace Inclusion	0.127	0.219	0.523	0.857

Table 2: Cross Loadings Results

	Workplace Diversity	Workplace Inclusion	Organizational Culture	Organizational Performance
age_diversity	0.727	0.321	0.245	0.09
gender_diversity	0.805	0.382	0.297	0.11
educ_exchange	0.627	0.479	0.157	0.284
gen_age_productive	0.787	0.353	0.248	0.109
career_growth	0.471	0.919	0.116	0.239
developing_skills	0.414	0.911	0.123	0.191
involve_partic_emplo	0.516	0.725	0.081	0.092
empower_women	0.275	0.042	0.683	0.127
manager_reward	0.176	0.146	0.780	0.221
responsibility	0.229	0.094	0.747	0.185
work_environment_harness	0.27	0.105	0.779	0.146
acceptable_graduate	0.122	0.149	0.185	0.725
program_completion	0.086	0.174	0.093	0.637
program_offer	0.186	0.158	0.219	0.751
student_enrolment	0.168	0.144	0.108	0.717

Table 3: Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) Results

	Organizational Culture	Organizational Performance	Workplace Diversity	Workplace Inclusion
Organizational Culture				
Organizational Performance	0.306			
Workplace Diversity	0.435	0.282		
Workplace Inclusion	0.162	0.273	0.702	

The effectiveness of the model is assessed by quantifying the differences observed in the dependent variables while evaluating the structural model requires analyzing crucial measures such as the R-Square and path coefficients (Edeh, Lo, & Khojasteh 2023). The R-Square values indicate the level of variance in the construct that is explained by the model (Chin,1998). Janadari, Ramalu, and Wei (2016) R-square values of 0.26 or higher is substantial, those of 0.13 are considered moderate and those of 0.02 are considered weak. Furthermore, Hair, Page and Brunsveld (2019) as well as Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2019) stated that Path models are diagrams that are utilized to visually represent the hypotheses and relationships between variables that are analyzed when applying SEM PLS. The path models consist of two sets of linear equations: the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model). The inner model outlines the connections between unobserved or latent 88 variables, while the outer model describes the relationships between a latent variable and its observable indicators (Ringle, Sarstedt, & Mooi 2010). After specifying the inner and outer models, the subsequent step involves executing the PLS-SEM algorithm. When applying the PLSSEM algorithm to calculate the outer loadings of a formative construct, it is recommended to retain indicators if their item loadings are relatively high, surpassing 0.50 (Hanafiah, 2020). Figure 1 show only outer loadings that surpass 0.50. In this regard, both the inner and outer models have significant effect on the construct as stated by the reliability and validity test results above.

Figure 1 illustrates that the model exhibits an R-Square variance of 10% for Organizational Culture, and 8% for Organizational Performance, serving as indicators of the model's explanatory power as stated by Edeh et al., (2023). This indicates that the independent variables in the study predict the dependent variable by 10% and 8% respectively, leaving a substantial portion of 90% and 92% unexplained. In other words, there are additional independent variables not considered in this study that significantly contribute to explaining the variation in organizational performance of the selected public higher education institutions.

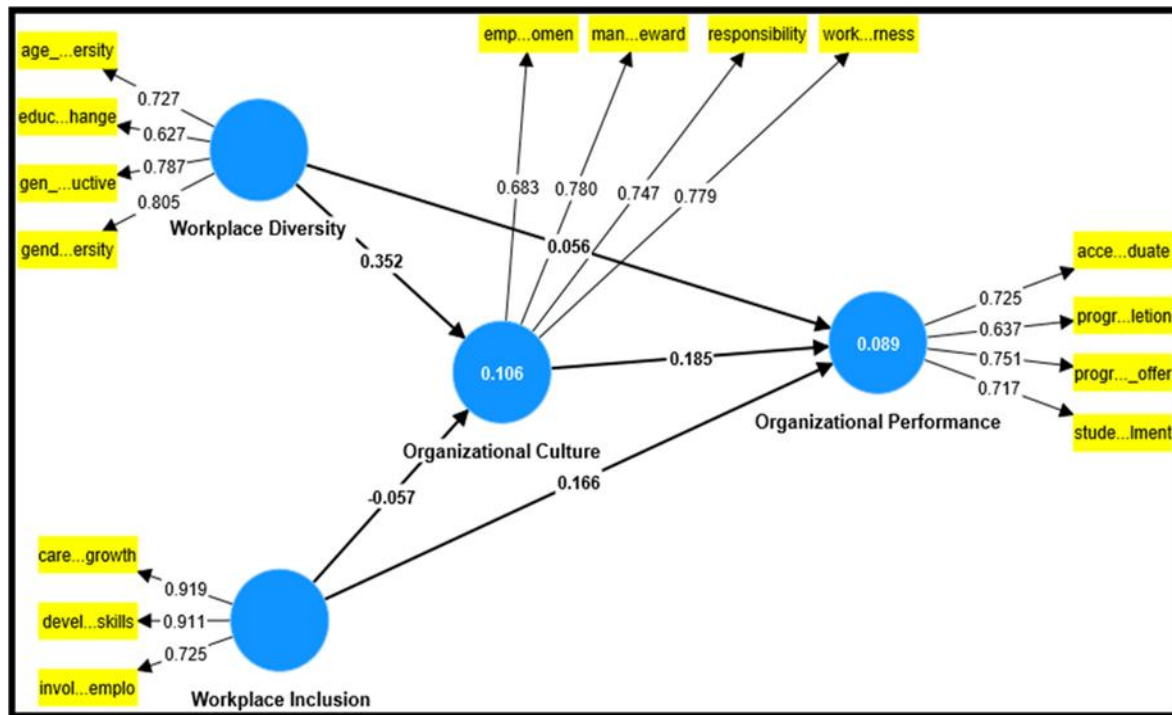


Figure 1: Structural Equation Model (Path Analysis Results)

Hypotheses Test Results

Hair et al (2014) as cited by Helm et al (2009) the path coefficient values in this analysis are standardized and range from -1 to +1. Coefficients closer to +1 indicate strong positive relationships, while coefficients of -1 suggest strong negative relationships. Likewise, p-value indicates the level of significance of the relationship between the variables being tested. A p-value less than 0.05 is generally considered statistically significant, while a p-value greater than 0.05 indicates that the relationship is not statistically significant. In this case hypothesis that are not indicated are automatically dropped.

Table 4: The findings of the study supported the hypotheses that Workplace Diversity positively influences both Organizational Performance and Organizational Culture (H1 and H4). However, hypotheses (H1) were found to be not significant with a P-Value > 0.05. In addition, Workplace Inclusion has a positive effect on Organizational Performance (H2), while it has negatively influenced Organizational Culture (H5). However, there is no significant relationship found between Workplace Inclusion and Organizational Culture (H5). Likewise, the finding of the study supported the hypotheses that organizational culture positively influences Organizational Performance (H3). The Hypotheses (H3) was found to be statistically significant with a P-Value < than 0.05. The reasons for the not significant of the above hypotheses could be attributed to factors such as small sample size, measurement error, limited variability, multicollinearity, contextual factors, and omitted variables.

Table 4: Path coefficients, P-values, Remark (hypothesis), Significant level

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coeff	P-value	Remark (Hypothesis)	Signifi P < 0.05
H1	Workplace Diversity -> Organizational Performance	0.056	0.548	Not Supported	Not Significant
H2	Workplace Inclusion -> Organizational Performance	0.166	0.037	Supported	Significant
H3	Organizational Culture -> Organizational Performance	0.185	0.035	Supported	Significant
H4	Workplace Diversity -> Organizational Culture	0.352	0.000	Supported	Significant
H5	Workplace Inclusion -> Organizational Culture	-0.057	0.522	Not Supported	Not Significant

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study revealed several key insights. Firstly, workplace diversity positively influences both organizational performance and organizational culture, although the relationship between workplace diversity and organizational performance was not statistically significant. Similarly, workplace inclusion positively influences organizational performance, while its effect on organizational culture was negative and non-significant. Lastly, organizational culture was found to have a significant positive influence on organizational performance. These results indicate that diversity and inclusion play a crucial role in shaping organizational outcomes, particularly in higher education institutions in The Gambia, where the cultural dynamics of inclusion and performance can vary.

This study contributes to both academia and practice by providing empirical evidence on the importance of workplace diversity and organizational culture in enhancing performance within public higher education institutions. It offers new insights into the complex relationship between inclusion, culture, and performance, highlighting the need for inclusive practices that are not only fair but also conducive to fostering a positive organizational culture. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on higher education institutions in The Gambia, a context where there is limited research on the interplay between diversity, inclusion, culture, and performance, thereby enriching the scientific literature and offering practical implications for policymakers and institution leaders aiming to improve performance outcomes.

However, the study is not without limitations. The relatively small sample size, potential measurement errors, and limited variability across the surveyed institutions may have influenced the results. Additionally, the study did not account for other factors such as leadership styles, employee motivation, and external socio-economic conditions, which

could further explain the variations in organizational performance. Future research could expand the sample size, explore these additional factors, and conduct a longitudinal study to capture changes over time, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play in public higher education institutions.

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