

Workplace Inclusion and Organizational Performance of Manufacturing Firms in Port Harcourt

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Abstract: *The emphasis of these study examined the association between workplace inclusion and organizational performance. The study precisely investigate inclusiveness procedures such as belonging, training and development inclusion, as manifested within the framework of organizations. The study adopted a descriptive research design to get replies from respondents which comprised of eleven (11) manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Using convenient sampling technique, 110 respondents were finally used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation were used for data analysis and hypotheses testing. Creative approach toward addressing the challenges and problems of workplace inclusion in organizations were defined. In conclusion, it was stated that workplace inclusion provides a more elaborate framework enriched with a variety of outlooks, ideas and functional dispositions that when effectively tapped and harnessed by the organization, impacts positively on its level of organizational performance, which improve organizational processes and supporting the achievement of the organization's goals.*

Keywords: *Workplace, inclusion, organizational performance, belonging, profitability, training and development.*

INTRODUCTION

Over the years the concept of organizational performance has been a topic of discussion both in academic and business environment. Organizational performance is how effective a manager mastery builds an accommodating working climate and their ability to lead a team to achieve effective results, it's also comprises the actual output or results of an organization as measured against its intended outputs (or goals and objectives). Organizational performance can be attained only by reconsidering strategies and systems of values that must represent the bedrock of the decision-making processes. It must be measured for managers and researchers to evaluate individual managerial decisions, the competitive position of firms, and the evolution and performance of firms over time (Richard, Devinney, Yip, & Johnson, 2009).

In the vein, according to Richard *et al.* (2009) organizational performance encompasses three specific areas of firm outcomes, financial performance (profits, return on assets, return on investment, etc.); product market performance (sales, market share, etc.); and shareholder return (total shareholder return, economic value added, etc.) Organizational performance can also be refer to the degree to which the organization, with some informational, financial, and human resources, positions itself effectively on the business market. Individual performance can influence the performance of the entire organization in the short, medium or long term in a positive or negative direction, As organizational performance is supposed to be reflected in better

financial performance in the medium or long term, because performance improvement is at the heart of strategic management and organization theory” (Venkatraman & Ramanujam, 1986).

The performance of every organization is very crucial, as different studies evolved with the development of models and methods for measuring and evaluation organizational performance such as; The Performance Pyramid System (Lynch & Cross, 1991). The influence that organizational performance has been exercising in organizations (Folan & Browne, 2005) and has become a pertinent and interesting component in the empirical research (Dess & Robinson, 1984; Garengo *et al.*, 2005).

More recently, scholars have sought out to elucidate the importance of inclusion to everyone, but especially to those who have been excluded historically (Ferdman, 2014; Winters, 2014). As described by Nishii (2013) “in inclusive environments, people of all backgrounds not just members of historically powerful identity groups are fairly treated, valued for who they are, and included in core decision making” (p. 1754). According Roberson (2006) inclusion is refers to the removal of obstacles to the full participation and contribution of employees in organizations. The ability to do things differently i.e. creativity, innovation, product development, new idea etc. duly characterize a critical emphasis in the management of inclusiveness towards organizational performance.

In summation, inclusion comprises equal opportunity for members of socially marginalized groups to participate and contribute while concurrently providing opportunities for members of non-marginalized groups and to support employees in their efforts to be completely engaged at all levels of the organization and to be genuinely themselves. Limeade (2021) conceptualized workplace inclusion into having a voice, belonging, sense of uniqueness, feeling valued, learning and development, collaborative environment, access to resources and strategic alignment. Numerous studies have shown the advantages that diversity and inclusion can have for an organization, including those related to role stress, organizational commitment, retention, and innovation (Gonzalez & DeNisi, 2009; Richard, Roh, & Pieper, 2013; Findler, Wind, & Mor Barak, 2007; Cho & Mor Barak, 2008; Hobman, 2003). However, Choi & Rainey, (2010) have shown that worker diversity and inclusion may have detrimental effects on an organization's overall success.

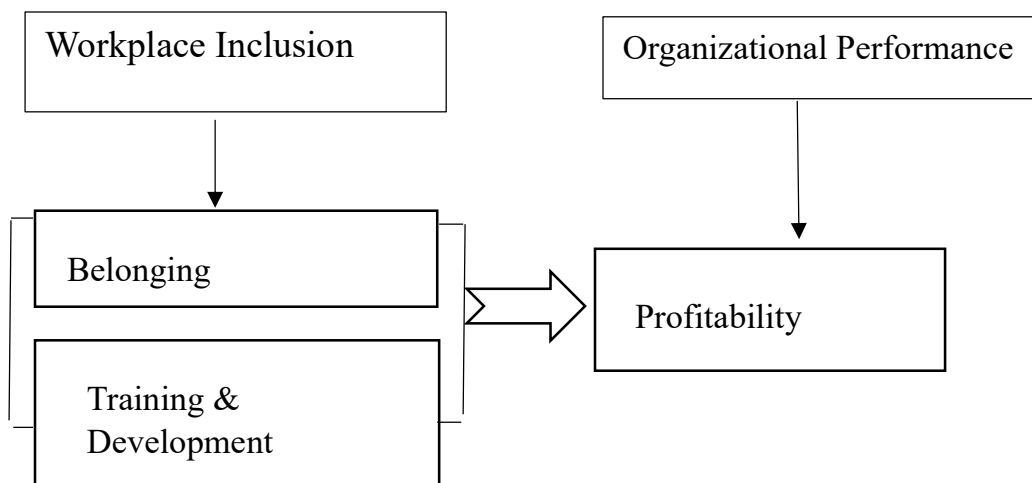
Organizations with inclusiveness of employee do well if vigorously managed, since workplace inclusion involves how employee perceives that he or she is an esteemed member of the work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies his or her needs for belongingness and uniqueness. However, to grow and successfully operate, organizations needs to be inclusive, because when employees feel the sense belonging, well trained and developed, it can lead to commitment, conscientiousness, job satisfaction and honesty, which in turn relate to organizational performance.

Against these back drop, this study tends to examine the relationship between workplace inclusion and organizational performance of manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt, though few studies have dive into workplace inclusiveness with different approach, methodology and perspective in terms of conclusion. With the previous differentials in the research area of workplace inclusion, these study tends to approach the construct in different dimension to feel such gap. Furthermore, inclusion brings dynamic and cognitive diversity of culture to workplace with several solutions to pressing problem in organizations.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to contribute to the understanding of workplace inclusion and organizational performance by postulating a framework, gaps that defines the concept and recognizing factors that influence its extant. Accomplishing these objective includes classifying and explicating the dimensions of workplace inclusion and organizational performance as well recognizing other relating factors. Meanwhile, there are many workplace inclusion characteristics, but this review paper focuses on belonging, training and development. The study also existing empirical reviews.

Framework



Source: Ryan and Deci (2001).

*Limeade and **Kinicki** (2021& 2007)*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

Upon closely examining what must be studied in the context, the theoretical and conceptual characterize the framework and extent of the research. Miller (1998) described inclusion as the degree to which various people are permitted to participate and are given the opportunity to contribute completely, whereas Roberson (2006) asserted that inclusion refers to the removal of barriers to the full involvement and contribution of employees in companies. Similar to this, Lirio, Lee, Williams, Haugen, and Kossek (2008) defined inclusion as the experience of belonging, and they defined inclusive actions like eliciting and appreciating contributions from all employees as being a regular part of organizational life. Avery, McKay, Wilson, and Volpone (2008) added that the degree to which workers feel their firms make an attempt to include all employees in tasks and operations with regard to their specific talents is the measure of inclusion. A culture of inclusion,

according to Wasserman, Gallegos, and Ferdman (2008), is one in which members of all social identification groups are given the chance to participate in essential tasks on behalf of the group, have their opinions heard and appreciated, and be present.

Social identity theory was adopted as the theoretical framework in the study on the role of workplace inclusion in the performance upshots of organizations. The social identity theory, which is a theory of group membership and behavior (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995), provides inspiration for achieving the goal of this study. As a sub-theory of social cognition, social identity theory developed with the determination of understanding how individuals make sense of themselves and other people in the social environment. As explained above, individuals derive a portion of their identities from their memberships and interactions within and among groups (Hogg & Terry, 2000).

Identifying the components of cognition, the elements of the theory of social identity is evolving till date. Turner (1981) later elucidated on the elements by articulating the processes of social identity development with a theory of self-categorization (Hogg & Terry, 2000).

Social identity is a concept with core and peripheral components evolving in a responding process between the individual and the group. Jenkins (2004) defined social identity as a continual relationship between the person and the main group (the "in-group") as well as between the person and other groups (the "outgroups"). In his opinion, it is about a process rather than a thing. The complex and dynamic nature of identity in social interactions is explained by its processual aspect. The context and the respective intensities of internal and external categorizations at the time determine the resulting identity, in effect.

Additionally, a sense of belonging is crucial for people to function at work and is a basic human need. Human cognition, emotions, and behavior are all influenced by the need to belong (Malone, Pillow, & Osman, 2012). From a philosophical perspective, belonging is the process of developing a sense of identification with one's social, relational, and material surroundings (May, 2011), as well as the sense of belonging to a group of people through social relationships, geographic locations, or specific localities (Miller, 2003). However, the dichotomous categories of "I belong" or "I do not belong" do not accurately capture how people feel their sense of belonging. Being a part of a group is the foundation of social identity, and the degree to which individuals experience being a part of a group entails various cognitive, affective, and evaluative components (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Brewer, 2007; Tajfel, 1972). Therefore, incorporating a person's understanding of his or her identity into community building reinforces that sense of belonging (Child & Rodrigues, 2011; Gherardi & Nicolini, 2002). Pickett, Bonner, and Coleman (2002) demonstrate that people choose to identify socially with a particular group when it promotes a sense of belonging and individuality, supporting the claim made by Ashforth and Mael (1989) that social identification is the perception of oneness with or belongingness to a group.

Training supports workers from all backgrounds and creates a stable atmosphere that favors an inclusive workplace. The training implies that many contemporary workplaces have people of diverse cultural backgrounds working together as employees, which may be a potential source of organizational conflict (Ukachukwu & Iherionhanna, 2013). The training does not only refer to differences between workers within the organization. The idea of training, learning, and development is to make sure that the organization has the skilled, knowledgeable, and engaged staff it needs. It includes providing learning schedules and programs, coaching and mentoring provided by line managers and others, and self-directed learning activities used by members. It

also includes facilitating the acquisition of skills and abilities by participants and teams through expertise. Learning and growth practices should be founded on a comprehension of the procedures involved in learning and development as they are presented in the study.

These approaches to learning, as defined by the concepts of training and learning, organizational learning, the dubious notion of the educational institution, and the contribution made by participants to their own learning and development (self-directed or self-managed learning), are difficult and numerous (Easterby-Smith, 1997; Easter-Smith & Araujo, 1999; Garvin, 1993; Honey, 1); To increase production, workers should train themselves and pick up skills from others. They receive training as members of teams and through interaction with their managers, fellow employees, and people outside the institution (social learning), while profitability uses the organization's resources to create wealth. In other words, this refers to an organization's ability to make money from its operations or activities. One of the four pillars for assessing the financial statements and overall performance of an organization is profitability. Efficiency, solvency, and market prospects make up the other three. These fundamental ideas are used by managers, creditors, and investors to assess an organization's performance and potential going forward if activities are managed well.

However, according to Holvino, Ferdman, and Merrill-Sands (2004), a multicultural, inclusive organization is one in which the diversity of knowledge and perspectives that members of various groups bring to the organization has shaped its strategy, work, management and operating systems, as well as its core values and norms for success.

Concept of Workplace Inclusion and Organizational Performance

Belonging

Participation in social interactions and one's environment, connote acceptance. According to Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, and Collier (1992; Hofmann, Vohs, & Baumeister (2012), belonging has to do with obtaining acceptance and preventing rejection by participating in interpersonal interactions and one's environment. Thus, lack of belonging is associated with decreased pro-social behavior and an increase in interpersonally harmful behavior, according to the social psychological literature (Baumeister, 2012; De Cremer, 2002; Thau, Aquino, & Poortyiet, 2007; Twenge, Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Bartels, 2007). According to Hagerty et al. (1992), "belonging to" refers to belonging as a relational phenomenon in which individuals perceive their membership in a group or organization to be valuable.

From a philosophical definition, belonging is the "process of creating a sense of identification with one's social, relational, and material surroundings" (May, 2011) and the feeling of being a part of a group of people through social connections, physical locations, or particular localities (Miller, 2003).

Training and Development

To ensure that the organization has the knowledgeable, skilled, and motivated staff it needs, training and development is described as a process. It entails facilitating the development of skills and abilities by team members and contributors through the use of expertise, learning activities and programs offered by the group, coaching and guidance provided by line managers and others,

and member-driven learning activities. Learning and development practices should be founded on an awareness of the procedures involved in learning and development as they are outlined in this chapter. These strategies are complex and numerous. They include the ways in which individuals and organizations learn, as defined by learning conceptions, organizational learning concepts, the dubious claims made by educational institutions, and the contributions made by individuals to their own learning and development (self-directed or self-managed learning) (Easterby-Smith, 1997; Easter-Smith & Araujo, 1999; Garvin, 1993; Honey, 1998; Honey & Mumford, 1996; Mezirow, 1985).

Profitability

An organization must be profitable in order to be considered profitable. When the total of the company's income exceeds the total of the company's outgoings within a reporting period, profitability results. It is quite possible that the profitability condition will not be met by the cash flows produced by the organization if an entity records its business transactions using the accrual basis of accounting because some accrual-basis transactions (like depreciation) do not involve cash flows. By selling assets that provide quick profits, profitability can be obtained in the near term. This level of profitability cannot be sustained, though.

Workplace Inclusion and Organizational Performance

Over the years, inclusion have always been a matter of debate towards organizational performance.

Nembhard and Edmondson (2006) looked into how employees perceived their managers' inclusion, which included inviting individuals to join the team and showing appreciation for their contributions. They concentrated on disparities in professional rank among team-leading doctors and other healthcare professionals rather than differences in demographics. They discovered that a leader's inclusivity and psychological safety were linked, and that this relationship in turn influenced team engagement. Furthermore, Avery et al. (2008) looked into how perceived inclusion influences the favorable relationship between seniority and intention to stay. Three studies showed that when perceived inclusion was high, there were smaller variations in retention intentions between employees with low and high seniority.

While the study emphasizes the value of perceived organizational support in fostering a sense of belonging, Wasserman et al. (2008) focus more heavily on the role of leaders in fostering an inclusive company culture. While measuring an organization's actual output or outcomes against its expected outputs (or goals and objectives), we refer to this as organizational performance. Since inclusion can result in higher output, further research is necessary to explore the relationship between inclusion and performance. Inclusiveness has an impact on organizational performance.

Businesses must ensure effective management of workforce diversity and ensuring that the best people are selected and retained for the optimum performance of their businesses as a means to monitor and assess performance in relation to the objectives and workplace inclusion. Since diversity management is figuring out how to elicit contributions from a varied range of workers. As a result, organizations are better equipped to support management inclusiveness programs by

providing managers with support in implementing organizational strategy and vision, in addition to a set of measurement indicators that reflect their goals and assess their performance (Kennerley and Neely, 2003). Meanwhile organization tends to obtain favourable outcomes in terms of its level of productivity, profitability, rate of employee turnover and innovativeness when inclusiveness is properly harness.

Empirical Literature Review

De Meulenaere, Boone, and Buyl (2016) used a sample of 5892 organizational observations and a panel data estimation technique to investigate the impact of age diversity in Belgium. They came to the conclusion that if the firm is large and has high job security, age diversity improves the firm's performance. Mahadeo, Soobaroyen, and Hanuman (2012) shown through the use of a cross-sectional archive that age diversity had a favorable impact on the return on assets of 42 Mauritius companies. Research on 95 US S&P 500 businesses found that age diversity has a negative impact on corporate social performance (Hafsi & Turgut, 2013).

In the Nigerian brewery industry, Odita and Egbule (2015) look into organizational performance and labor diversity. The purpose of the study was to assess the effects of workplace diversity on organizational effectiveness in the brewery sector using a sample of breweries. Diversity in the workplace is a multifaceted and multidimensional idea that will advance as more sectors go toward the global market. Both stratified sampling and plain random sample were used in the survey study design method. To review the nature of statistical significance of variables, linear regression and correlation analysis were used as an analytical tool. The results demonstrate that the gender diversity regression analysis result showed a positive relationship with innovation, giving the Beta value ($=.525$, $p 0.01$); the ethnic diversity regression analysis result showed a positive relationship with creativity, giving the Beta value ($=.612$, $p 0.00$); and the cultural diversity regression analysis result demonstrated a positive relationship with innovation, giving the Beta value ($=.811$, $p 0.00$). The study came to the conclusion that any organization with leaders and policy makers who are pragmatic, perceptive, and persistent will benefit from team building and group training in conjunction with effective diversity management as a cure for the cankerworm of subpar employee performance that has put the bottom line of the balance sheets of most organizations in brackets.

Methodology

The study is a cross-sectional research design involving analysis of primary data obtained from manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The population of the study was eleven (11) manufacturing firms. Since the theme to be examined is at micro level of individual and basically is crucial to inclusion and organizational performance, the scope of the study is to identify the perception of employees on inclusion, using belonging and training and development as the unconstraint variables while profitability as the basic constraint variable. Also present how organizational performance is improved positively through workplace inclusion, indicating that middle and lower level employees only made up the population from all sphere of the organizations. In this instance, the population was drawn from ten (10) staff of each of the eleven (11) manufacturing firms totaling one hundred and ten (110) respondents. Nevertheless, 105 respondents were conveniently selected. The study was quantitative in nature. Closed-ended

questionnaire as the major instrument for data collection were sent instantaneously via electronic means e.g Whatapps and Telegram, other forms as well to the respondents. The human resource departments of the manufacturing firms sent an introductory letter stating the study's title and aim and requesting the intended respondents' contact information. Thus, it reassures them of strict confidentiality of any information given out. After recurrent visits, clarification and feedback, the contact information of these intended respondents was given. Impediment experienced at this point was the insensitive attitude of these respondents and biasness as a result of their differences (understanding, age, gender, belief and religion). Nonetheless, suitable responses were obtained after ensuring them of confidentiality. The value of Cronbach's alpha was used for reliability of instrument. The primary data obtained via the use of a questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive as well as inferential statistics, while bivariate model for the hypotheses.

Results

A total of 110 questionnaires were dispersed to the respondents. Only 108 were duly filled and returned, representing a 99% response rate. All responses were measured on a 5-level rating, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The demographic profile of respondents is showed in Table 1 above. The age bracket of respondents' analysis revealed that 52 of the respondents representing 48.6%, were within the age bracket of 31-35 (highest). At the same time, 10 of the respondents representing 9.3% were within the age bracket of 20-25 years (lowest). Longevity signifies experience, and it is a common logic that experience employees possess the more cognitive capacity. While 42.1 % represent 26-30 of the respondent. The table below further explicate demographic of the respondents.

Correlation for Belonging and Organizational Performance

		Workplace Inclusion	Belonging	Profitability
Workplace Inc	Pearson Correlation	1	.733***	.624***
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.002
	N	108	108	108
Belong	Pearson Correlation	.733***	1	.777***
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		.000
	N	108	108	108
Profitability	Pearson Correlation	.624***	.777***	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.000	.
	N	108	108	108

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

This highlights the correlation for workplace inclusion and profitability. The correlation for the construct shows a significant correlation at $r = .733^{**}$ where $P\text{-value} = .000$ ($P < 0.001$). This infers

a significant relationship between both variables at 95% level of confidence. Therefore maintain that there is a positive relationship between workplace inclusion and profitability. The correlation for belonging and profitability indicates a strong and significant association at $r = .624^{**}$ where $P\text{-value} = .000$ ($P < 0.001$). This entails a positive relationship between both variables at 95% level of confidence. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between belonging and profitability of manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt.

Correlation for Training and Development and Organizational Performance

		Training	Development	Profitability
Training	Pearson Correlation	1	.824***	.787***
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.002
	N	108	108	108
Development	Pearson Correlation	.824***	.666***	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		.000
	N	108	108	108
Profitability	Pearson Correlation	.787***	1	.666***
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.000	.
	N	108	108	108

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

This posit the correlation for training, development and profitability. The correlation for the construct indicates a positive correlation at $r = .824^{**}$ where $P\text{-value} = .000$ ($P < 0.001$). This shows a positive relationship between both variables at 95% level of confidence. Therefore uphold that there is a significant relationship between training and profitability. The correlation for development and profitability indicates a strong connection at $r = .787^{**}$ where $P\text{-value} = .000$ ($P < 0.001$). This showed a significant relationship between both variables at 95% level of confidence. Thus, there is a positive relationship between training, development and profitability of manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt.

Managerial Implication

This research will enable management of manufacturing firms and other associated field, highlight the application of workplace inclusion. This will enable the accomplishment of growth, sustainable goals, increase in market share, thereby achieving sets objectives. This will equally incorporate better blueprint and strategical process. This study will also allow managers build culture of training and development, belongingness in carrying out effective firm's performance, such that they appreciate the crucial role of workplace inclusion. This is in support of the opinion that

workplace inclusion will prime to constructive performance outcomes and fashion a competitive advantage for the firms.

Conclusion/Implication

Productivity and profitability can be increased both at individual and at unit levels in the organization with employees inclusiveness from various diverse culture contributing to the success of the organization when these employees feel belonged, appreciated, trained and development been employed in the which they work, there level of performance changes in the positive.

Realizing organizational performance depends mainly on how an organization acclimatizes to changes in the external environment. Organization performance mostly seen as the degree to which an organization, as a social system, with certain resources and means, achieves its objectives (Tannenbaum and Shimdt, 2009; in Horga, 2012, p.24).

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