

# Influence of Cultural Diversity on the Organisational Culture of Construction Firms in Minna

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Increasing in local and global movement of people from one locality to another has placed a great demand on the management of diverse workforce via the organisational culture in organisations such as Nigerian construction firms. Organisational culture is the unified central system that guides the operations of construction firms, however the interplay of different diversity among workers often obstruct the effectiveness of organisational culture in bringing to bear the anticipated organisational performance. Hence, this paper examined the influence of cultural diversity on the organisational culture of construction firms in Minna through the use of questionnaire survey to elicit data from respondents. The paper reported the pilot study of a larger study. The results showed that all the variables of cultural diversity are negatively correlated with the variables of organisational culture, however, race, age and disability are positively correlated with the construct 'organisation make employees aware of equal opportunity policies and provisions. Ethnicity and race have strong negative correlation with organisational culture on recruitment of diverse workers, discrimination policy, and reporting of discrimination. The negative correlations of the cultural diversities with the variables of organisational culture have implication on the firms' work outcome if these grey areas are not given attention to by the management. The focus of the construction firms should not only be on the economic aspect so that the benefit of diversity can be fully utilised for a better organisational performance.

**Keywords:** Construction firm, Culture, Cultural diversity, Organisational culture, Pilot study

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## Introduction

Construction firms' through their organisational culture integrate and manage diverse workforce made up of varieties of people with similar and different pattern of thoughts, socio-cognitive, values and many other virtues that made them similar and differ from one another (Loosemore *et al.*, 2012). Increasing growth of diverse workforce in organisations such as construction industry has brought the attention of many researchers to the subject of workers' diversity (Gupta, 2013).

Culture influences individual and organisational behaviours (Hofstede, 1980; Olsen & Martins 2012; Jonna, 2013) and it will not be out of place to study this intrinsic aspect considering the importance of the

sector to the nation's economy. The differences in individual culture is grouped into three dimensions of diversities termed primary level, secondary level, and the tertiary level. These differences interact and influence the behaviour of workers in their organisations. This influence can be detrimental or beneficial to the organisations (Olsen & Martins, 2012; Gupta, 2013). Workplace diversity can also generate conflicts between employees. This clash arises owing to variances in perception, ideas, behaviours, interest, cognitive styles, values, attitudes, religious and political differences and unjustified distribution of resources (Elsaid, 2012; Ehimare & Ogaga-Oghene, 2011). Jackson *et al.* (2003) further reiterated that all dimensions of diversity can have positive as

well as negative effects. Loosemore *et al.* (2012) and Elsaid (2012) opined that effective management is required to alleviate the detrimental effect to the organisation. Diversity requires a type of organisational culture that supports every member of an organisation to reach his/her full potential (Bateman & Snell, 2008; Olsen & Martins, 2012).

Organisational culture is critical to organisations; it spells out the ways, manner and direction of flow of ideas, behaviour and values of the organisation to the workers in line with the company's objectives. Realising the company's objectives is a function of the strength or weakness of the organisation culture (Handy, 1985; Olsen & Martins, 2012; Flamholtz & Randle, 2011; Thokozani, 2017). It is based on this premise that the study focused on all dimensions of diversity relating them to organisational culture in order to understand the relationship among the constructs in the Nigerian construction context. Therefore, the paper examined the influence of cultural diversity on organisational culture of construction firms in Minna.

## **Literature Review**

### **Organisational culture**

Culture in any organisation cannot be overlooked; it is a vital aspect of the inside environs of any organisation (Ricky, 2007). Culture in the construction industry can be explained as the features of the industry, styles at which work processes are being accomplished, what is carried out, how and when it is done, the people involved, their skills, their values, reasons behind how their works are being carried out thus, and the norms of the organisation (Ankrah *et al.*, 2009). These perceptions of culture as applied to construction are consistent with the earlier general definitions in which culture is seen as "what people contemplate, what people do, and the finished products (materials) that is being produced" (Bodley, 1994). Maloney and Federle (1990) for instance pointed out that the culture of a construction organisation was a primary determinant of performance within that organisation. Low and Shi (2001) presented

a study on cross-cultural working experience which showed inter alia that mismanaging cultural differences (workers' diversity) rendered otherwise successful managers and organisations ineffective and frustrated when working across cultures. Low and Shi (2001) demonstrated that any organisation that wanted to manage a construction project successfully in another country had to understand the culture of the host country.

Hofstede (1997) defined organisational culture as the mutual programming of the mind which makes a distinction among organisations. Evans (2012) posited that organisational culture is the set of values, beliefs, behaviours, customs, and attitudes that helps the members of an organisation understand what it stands for, how it does things, and what it considers important. Schein (1990) positioned organisational culture as a structure with two strata of theories, that is, the detectable and undetectable characteristics. The detectable layer entails business building, attire, conduct approaches, code of practice, narratives, mythologies, language, and rituals. Also, the undetectable stratum connotes shared values, customs, belief, and suppositions of business organisational members.

Organisational culture acculturates workers along a mutual value, the whole essence of workforce management is founded on organisational culture as it is seen as a key to cohesiveness of workforce behaviour, and having the job well done, this is in line with Cox (1994) who affirmed that organisational culture is now a key instrument to apprehend and evaluate workers in the workplace. Suffice to say that any firm who anticipate good organisational performance need to take seriously the workforce diversity (Olsen & Martins, 2012).

Organisational culture in the field of management is known as a multidimensional management tools that offers workers within the workplace a structure of character recommendation for

conducts, habits, beliefs, norms and patterns in the establishment for the benefits of the organisation (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Schein, 1990). It is a form of device used to mould the behaviour of every member of the organisation in agreement with the business principle (Schein, 1990).

Since organisational culture has been mentioned as the core determinant of the workers' motivations to a successful organisational performance (Kwak, 2003), it is worth noting that the size of the organisation, the strength, people, and the organisations' structure also affect the effectiveness of the organisational culture in effecting company performance. In the light of diversity, a weak organisational culture is an indication of culture that cannot maximise the workforce diversity to promote organisational performance.

#### **Cultural diversities**

Diversity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has become a business thing with many corporations realising the value of diversity. Diversity has gone beyond only identifying demographical differences such as age, gender, race, among workers, it has extended to all dimension of diversities such as human values, group norms, beliefs, education, religion and other invisible areas of man (Thomas, 2006; Kreitner & Kinichi, 2004), which has made it all inclusive. Kreitner and Kinichi (2004) defined diversity as the presence of array of variations and sameness in human capital that has the potential of producing a detrimental or beneficial effect on the organisational performance.

Organisations' employees all have their individual's cultures which manifest at work in various diversities such as values, beliefs, age, cultural background, physical abilities and disabilities, race, ethnicity, religion, and gender in organisations (Cox, 1994; Aluko, 2003; Jonna, 2013). Diverse workforce obligates varied thoughts, ideas, norms, beliefs, values and trends which can be both beneficial and detrimental to the organisation's outcomes (Milliken & Martins, 1996; Olsen & Martins, 2012).

Since organisational culture is influenced by people, it then follows that the interaction of diversities of people may negate organisational culture (Handy, 1985; Kwan & Ofori, 2001).

Diversity is both beneficial and detrimental to organisations depending on the organisation's level of control over the workforce (Cox, 1993; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Joshi & Roh, 2009). Diversity is advantageous to organisations in various areas such as workgroup cohesiveness, creativity and innovations, problem solving, productivity, and other measure of performance in bringing about overall organisational performance (Gupta, 2013). On the other hand, diversity could be detrimental to organisations. Tajfel (1985) explained its detrimental effect using social identity approach of in-group and out-group. There is existence of in-group and out-group in organisations, though this at times create a competitive environment for groups to thrive and emerged the best, it also brings prejudice against the out-group who are seen as an outsider. This may result in high worker turnover, absenteeism, hiding information that would have improved the productivity of co-workers which may lead to underperformance of the firm.

Thus, the extent to which organisations work with or reject cultural diversity may be influenced by the organisational culture (Scott, 2001). This obviously indicates that diversity and organisational culture have influence on each other. Organisational culture is measured along various dimensions such as leadership, teamwork, innovation, motivation, reward orientation and client orientation and people. Central to the dimensions mentioned above is the teamwork spirit intensified by co-operation among team members based on the influence of organisational culture. Organisations valuing diversity implement diversity management plan which becomes organisational culture right from the recruitment/selection which aid in manipulating the workforce through the teamwork to realise overall organisational performance.

## Research Methodology

This paper reported the results of pilot study conducted as part of a larger study. This was achieved through the use of questionnaire survey that relies on deductive reasoning accordingly before reaching a conclusion (Wheeldon, 2010).

## Sample size and data analysis

The sample frame for the pilot survey is the construction professionals that were in the managerial cadre/or leader of a group in the job dimension of director, admin/ human resources manager, project manager, supervisors, and foremen. The sample size of 20 construction firms was gotten from population size of 50 construction firms in Minna, Niger State. Isaac and Michael (1995) suggested 10-30 sample size for pilot study in a survey research. The population was drawn from V-connect (2016) database of construction companies in Minna. Twenty (20) structured questionnaires were self-administered to the randomly selected construction firms. All the questionnaires were returned, however, only 17 could be used in the analysis. The data obtained was analysed using percentages, mean scores and Spearman rank correlation which formed the basis for the conclusion reached and the recommendations made.

## Culture instruments measurement

Researchers in the field of culture had adopted either the typological method or dimensional method in measuring organisational culture (Scott *et al.*, 2003). The outcome of the typological method of measurement is picking one of the various types of organisational culture that fits the context. The dimensional method gives details of a culture by its location on a

number of continuous variables (Scott *et al.*, 2003). Many of the authors using a dimensional method usually use Likert measure in which respondents are instructed to make a choice from the predefined statements provided for them. Dimensional method of measurement was adopted in this paper.

## Measurement

Taken into consideration the latent oddity of the variables measured in the study, multi-item, 7- point Likert scale (1=very unimportant and 7=very important) for organisational culture and diversity. A reliability test was carried using Cronbach alpha. The values of the Cronbach alpha for organisational culture construct are: Diversity culture - 0.864 (12 items); Leadership and communication - 0.923 (10 items); Employee values - 0.871 (13 times). Cronbach alpha values for diversity constructs are: Demography diversity - 0.876 (11 items); Socio-cognitive diversity - 0.802 (11 items); Organisational diversity - 0.843 (11 items). Most of the Cronbach alpha values obtained for the various construct were above 0.8 which according to Pallant (2011), is appropriate internal consistency reliability.

## Results and Discussion

Descriptive and inferential analysis were carried out on the data obtained.

The result in Table 1 showed that project manager makes up of 41.2%, Manager of 5.9%, senior management 11.8%, supervisors 29.4% and Foreman 11.8% of the respondents.

**Table 1: Role in organisation**

Role	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Project manager	7	41.2	41.2	41.2
Manager	1	5.9	5.9	47.1
Senior management position	2	11.8	11.8	58.8
Supervisor	5	29.4	29.4	88.2
Foreman	2	11.8	11.8	100.0
Total	17	100.0	100.0	

**Table 2: Years of experience**

Year	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1yr	1	5.9	5.9	5.9
1-<2YRS	2	11.8	11.8	17.6
3<5YRS	4	23.5	23.5	41.2
6-<10YRS	7	41.2	41.2	82.4
>10YRS	3	17.6	17.6	100.0
Total	17	100.0	100.0	

The respondents were experienced in the construction industry the least year of experience is 1 year which constitutes 5.9 %, 6- <10 years of experience constituted the highest work experience of the respondents (41.2%) as shown in Table 2. This showed that the information supplied by the respondents could be deemed to be reliable.

The size of the organisation in terms of size fell between the small and medium sized; with 64.7% as small sized firms and medium sized firms constituted 35.3 % of the total as indicated in Table 3.

**Diversity component that conflicts with the organisational culture**

This section discussed the result and finding as regard interaction of diversity components with organisational culture. The essence of this was to disclose whether cultural diversities actually influence organisational culture. The data obtained was subjected to Spearman's correlation analysis to determine the strength of relationships between the variables under the two constructs. The results of the analyses in Tables 4 - 8 showed that diversities components interact at different dimension to influence organisational culture.

Table 4 indicated that all the variables of cultural diversity are negatively correlated with the variables of organisational culture, however, race, age and disability are positively correlated with the construct 'organisation make employees aware of equal opportunity policies and provisions. Ethnicity and race have strong negative correlation with organisational culture on recruitment of diverse workers, discrimination policy, and reporting of discrimination. Ethnicity and race have negative correlation of ( $r = -0.517, \rho = 0.01$ ), ( $r = -0.376, \rho \neq 0.05$ ) respectively with organisation that have a diversity and/or equal opportunities policy in place but the latter of no significance. In a related development, race and ethnicity with values of ( $r = -0.667, \rho = 0.01$ ) and ( $r = -0.673, \rho = 0.01$ ) respectively are also negatively correlated with the organisation culture factor of organisation employ a diverse range of people. The result is in line with Loosemore *et al.* (2012) assertion that cultural diversity has negative impact on the organisational work outcome and management must make a deliberate effort to ensure management of cultural diversities, it is not only to have it documented it must be carried out.

**Table 3: Size of workers**

Size	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1-49	11	64.7	64.7	64.7
50-249	6	35.3	35.3	100.0
Total	17	100.0	100.0	

**Table 4: Organisational culture versus diversity component interaction**

Organisational culture factors	Diversity Component								
	Race	Ethnicity	Gender	Age	Disability	Nationality	Marital status	Family responsibilities	Cultural heritage
Organisation allow all employees to celebrate holidays appropriately	-.502*	-.565**	-.435	-.122	-.288	-.472	-.692**	-.522*	-.433
Organisation employ a diverse range of people	-.667**	-.673**	-.660**	-.391	-.220	-.370	-.629*	-.350	-.490
Organisation have a diversity and/or equal opportunities policy in place	-.376	-.517*	-.537*	-.009	-.210	-.257	-.442	-.300	-.391
Organisation make employees aware of equal opportunity policies and provisions	0.30	-.051	-.118	.226	.307	-.172	-.144	-.142	-.074

**Table 5: Organisational culture versus diversity component**

Organisational culture factor	Diversity Component							
	Socio-economic status	Physical appearance	Religion	Culture/tradition	Sexual orientation	Thinking style	Geo-political origin	Family status
Organisation allow all employees to celebrate holidays appropriately	-.378	.334	-.656**	-.750**	.101	.549*	-.327	-.486
Organisation employ a diverse range of people	-.109	.420	-.492	-.629**	-.109	.360	-.161	-.256
Organisation have a diversity and/or equal opportunities policy in place	-.010	.352	-.754**	-.653**	.140	.460	-.460	-.307
Organisation make employees aware of equal opportunity policies and provisions	-.100	.570*	-.447	-.364	-.225	.154	-.617*	-.584*
Organisation have procedures in place for reporting discrimination	-.093	-.244	-.524*	-.651**	-.230	.191	-.270	-.198

Table 5 showed that all the socio cognitive cultural diversity variables are negatively correlated with the variables of organisational culture with the exception of physical appearance and thinking style which positively correlated with organisational culture. This is an indication

that the stronger the organisational culture the more the thinking style will be in consonance with the organisational culture and physical appearance will not obstruct relationship among the diverse workers. The negative correlations of the cultural diversities with the variables of

organisational culture have implication on the firms' work outcome if these grey areas are not given attention to by the management.

Table 6 showed that all the variables of organisational culture correlate negatively with ethnicity. The implication is that the more the organisational culture instituting diversities in recruitment the more concern they should give to the aspect of ethnicity among the workforce because of the possibility of social identity which may cause segregation along ethnicity resulting into discrimination and nepotism which may impact negatively on their performance.

Political orientation, assumptions, feelings, marital status and family responsibility also conflict with the variables of employees' values of organisational culture as depicted in Table 7

The findings in Tables 4 - 8 are in line with Chau (2013), Loosemore *et al.* (2012) and Olsen and Martins (2012) that emphasised that cultural diversity is as a result of the various world views of employees, hence, if not properly managed may affect the organisational performance. Chau (2013) further reiterated that although a diverse workforce creates some degree of creativeness, conflict among people on issues that stemmed from cultural background can impair the organisation's setting thereby reducing multicultural creativity. As it is imperative for organisations to embrace diversity, so also is it of great importance for organisations to develop enough capacity through their organisational culture to get workers' values in line with the organisational values. This is in order to prevent diversity detrimental processes that could impair organisational performance.

Table 8 showed that race conflicts with most of the organisational culture variables.

**Table 6: Organisational culture versus Ethnicity**

Organisational culture	Ethnicity
Organisation allow all employees to celebrate holidays appropriately	-.673**
Organisation employ a diverse range of people	-.565*
Organisation have a diversity and/or equal opportunities policy in place	-.517*
Spearman's rho ** $p=0.01$ , * $p=0.05$	
At this company, employees appreciate others whose race/ethnicity is different from their own	-.851**
Organisation have procedures in place for reporting discrimination	-.669**
I am given equal opportunity to speak with the nearest manager about what consequences the diversity will have for me	-.570*
I am comfortable being myself at work	-.659**
I feels emotionally and socially supported at work	-.678*
I feel that I belongs at your organisation	-.569*
I face unique challenges that make it difficult to get to work or work the hours expected at times expected	-.690*

**Table 7: Organisational culture versus diversity component**

Organisational culture	Political orientation	Assumptions	Feelings	Marital status	Family responsibilities	Physical appearance	Religion
I have faced or witnessed prejudice or discrimination in my work setting?	-.795**	-.577*	-.634*	-.675**	-.560*		
I frequently interact with colleagues outside of my workgroup/team.						.763**	-.575*

**Table 8: Organisational culture versus Race**

	Decision on organisational culture	Race
	Organisation employ a diverse range of people	-.502*
	At this company, employees appreciate others whose race/ethnicity is different from their own	-.810**
<b>Spearman's rho</b>	Organisation have procedures in place for reporting discrimination	-.648**
	I am comfortable being myself at work	-.584*
	I feel that I can disclose my whole identity to my colleagues	-.609*
	I feel that I belong at your organization	-.532*
	I face unique challenges that make it difficult to get to work or work the hours expected at times expected	.529*
**p=0.01, *p=0.05	I faced obstacles in career progression or ability to participate fully in work processes that are not experienced by all other colleagues	.575*

## Conclusion

Managing construction firm's workers could be so challenging because of their diversities. The effect of the interplay among the diverse workers comes to the fore during interaction with others on the job. This interplay could either be detrimental or beneficial to the organisation. Beneficial if there is strong organisational culture that could leverage all the diversities in harmony to the organisational values for a productive workplace. The negative correlations of the cultural diversities with the variables of organisational culture have implication on the firms' work outcome if these grey areas are not given attention to by the management. Paying attention to the diversity of the workers will mean establishing a diversity culture where

similarities and differences of workers are managed for a better teamwork and organisational performance.

## Recommendations

It is imperative that the construction firms institute a profound organisation culture that is well grounded in diversity initiatives and strategies whereby workable diversity policy in which the similarities and differences of every member of the workforce are valued. The focus of the construction firms should not only be on the economic aspect so that the benefit of diversity can be fully utilised for a better organisational performance.



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