

An Assessment of Workforce Diversity on Employee Performance in Rural District Councils

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the effects of workforce diversity on employee performance by combining qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Respondents were drawn from rural local authorities in Mashonaland West Province, Zimbabwe. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data from a sample size of 169 respondents. The Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) Version 16.0 and thematic analysis were used to analyse quantitative and qualitative data respectively. The study found that workforce in local authorities was diversified on the basis of age, gender, level of education, political affiliation, experience and in-service duration. Homogeneity among workforce was found on the basis of nationality. It was concluded that both the primary and secondary dimensions of workforce diversity affected employee performance. Gender diversity had an inverse association with employee performance whilst age diversity was not statistically significant. The study recommended the crafting of inclusive policies and a workforce diversity management framework. Employers were advised to treat different employees differently so as to tap the best out of workforce diversity. It was further recommended that employees should be trained to be tolerant of the differences among themselves.

Key words: *Workforce diversity, employee diversity, diversity, employee performance, workplace*

1. INTRODUCTION

With increased globalisation and interrelatedness comes a blend of different individuals who meet at the same workplace to work towards achieving the same objectives. Workforce nowadays is made up of employees of different ethnic, social, economic, racial and physiological backgrounds. In some cases, this has led to serious clashes, hatred and production dysfunctionality in the work place (Zhuwao, 2017) and this has given rise to the need to create an efficient, united, harmonious, homogenous workforce regardless of the heterogeneity. This imperative led to the development of a buzzword - workforce diversity.

Workforce diversity is defined by Alghazo and Shaiban (2016) as the heterogeneous composition of employees of the same organization in terms of gender, age, race, and educational background. Barak (2016) proposes a broader definition of workforce diversity as employee differences that extend to the values, organisational roles, occupation and behavioural styles. The middle of the park and rationalised understanding of workforce diversity was suggested by Ogbo, Ukpere and Iyamho (2014) who define it as the multitude of the individual differences and similarities that exist among the people working in an

organization. Therefore, workforce diversity entails acceptance, respect and appreciation of each employee's uniqueness.

1.1 Background to the study

The world over, employee diversity has been perceptible with varied responses from country to country. The European Commission (EC) has proposed that their member states ensure women representation in the public listed companies of 30% and 40% by 2015 and 2016 respectively (Busolo, 2017). In the United States of America, Kamonjoh (2015) reports that a tremendous increase in boardroom diversity of United States corporations has been recorded over the last decade as a result of the demographic aspects such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion and level of education. Japan's Ministry of Labour and Welfare estimated Japan's women representation was at 48.3% (Magoshi & Chang, 2018).

Africa too is also a diversified continent. Reports from Nigeria indicate that companies in that country not only boast of diversity in terms of age and gender but more importantly in the ethnicity and nationality of the workforce (Mwikali & Kyalo, 2015). A cross comparison with Egypt's workforce noted that workplaces were immensely diversified and many could speak Arabic in addition to foreign languages such as French, English and German (Busolo, 2017). A preview of the southern part of the African continent shows the same trend of workforce diversity exists. According to Zhuwao (2017) in South Africa there were high threats and suspicions among various nationals in many organisations. The black movement of 1994 was affecting the coordination of work activities among a diversified labour force in some parts of South Africa.

Zimbabwe too is part of that bandwagon of diversified employees. The development is deeply rooted in the country's legislation which calls for equality and cooperation among various stakeholders. The Zimbabwean Constitution (2013) mandates full participation of women in socio-economic activities (Section 17), Section 22 of the Zimbabwe's Constitution acknowledges full participation of the disabled in all aspects of life. The Labour Act Chapter 28:01 also cogently promotes congruence at work places and protects the rights of men and women, including minority stakes (Madhuku, 2017). The laws of the land have made it necessary for people with different backgrounds to work together at the same workplace.

Following the dictates and injunctions of the law, and the generally acceptable best practices, local authorities in Zimbabwe have been recruiting employees from all walks of life under the flagship banner '*an equal opportunity employer*'. This trend has culminated a combination of a diverse and interrelated workforce at most rural local authorities in Zimbabwe.

Of interest are the Rural District Councils (RDC) in Mashonaland West Province, Zimbabwe. In Mashonaland West there are seven rural district councils, namely; Chegutu, Hurungwe, Mhondoro-Ngezi, Makonde, Nyaminyami, Sanyati and Zvimba Rural District Councils. However, this study zeroed in on three such Rural District Councils namely Mhondoro-Ngezi, Sanyati and Chegutu for purposes on manageability, need for in-depth analysis and cost containment.

Rural District Councils are equal opportunity employers in geographic areas with varied cultures. That has created a perfect blend of varied cultures with district councils in Mashonaland West employing the country's different tribes of Ndebele, Shona and the Tonga among others. Differences in language and ethnicity are a source of conflict in the organisation. Even the biblical example of the tower of Babel confirms that language differences could be destructive. Construction of the biblical tower of Babel came to a halt when diverse languages emerged (Genesis 11: 1-9).

According to the Association of Rural District Councils in Zimbabwe (ARDCZ) (2019) the workforce of rural district councils is a blend of both males and females. The gender demographics are more tilted towards masculinity with an average of 25% of all employees being women (ARDCZ, 2019). Though there are no direct indications of conflict as caused by gender, there is an undeniable fact of under-representation and gender imbalance in most rural councils.

Primary Workforce Diversity consists of natural variations which one cannot change such as age, gender and disability among others, whilst Secondary Workforce Diversity consists of variations which one can change in life such as education, political affiliation, work experience, religion etc.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Employee diversity has become a buzz word in the global village. Much has been written and studied about it including that absence of diversity affects staff morale, motivation and workplace democracy. Rural Local Authorities in Zimbabwe, which taunt themselves as 'equal opportunity employers' are faced with employee diversity issues. Not many studies have investigated the effects of different aspects of diversity on employee performance. This problem comes amid indications of poor workforce diversity management strategies at Rural District Councils (RDCs) and the absence of inclusive policies that promote the unification of workforce regardless their heterogeneous backgrounds (RDC Workforce Report, 2019). Poor diversity strategies exist in spite of the fact that there is a diversified labour force at all rural district councils in Mashonaland West Province in Zimbabwe. There is a gap in literature on the effects of diversity on employee performance which this study sought to fill.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study was to investigate the effects of workforce diversity on employee performance in rural district authorities in Mashonaland West Province. The following sub objectives guided the study.

- 1.3.1 To analyse the forms of diversity that exists in the workforce of rural district authorities.
- 1.3.2 To analyse the effects of primary dimensions of workforce diversity on employee performance

- 1.3.3 To assess the impact of secondary dimensions of workforce diversity on employee performance
- 1.3.4 To explore the strategies used by rural district authorities in Mashonaland West Province to manage a diversified workforce.

1.4 Research hypotheses

Main hypotheses: H₁: Workforce diversity positively affects employee performance.
H₀: There is no association between workforce diversity and employee performance.

The alternate sub hypotheses for primary dimensions of workforce diversity were:

- H₁1: Age diversity affects employee performance.
- H₁2: Gender diversity positively affects employee performance.

The alternate sub hypotheses for secondary dimensions of workforce diversity were:

- H₁3: Educational diversity positively affects employee performance.
- H₁4: Political affiliation positively affects employee performance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Diversity of workforce

After three decades at the centre stage in work places, there is still considerable debate and confusion over what actually constitutes workforce diversity (Gitonga, Kamaara & Orwa, 2016). There has been much debate on whether diversity is physiological (age, gender, race) or it includes any aspects of human resources heterogeneity. In terms of employee diversity, some scholars and authorities argue that diversity is broader whilst others coin that it should be viewed from a narrow perspective (Ehimare & Omankhanlen, 2017).

Scholars in favour of a narrow definition (Ehimare & Omankhanlen, 2017; Lee & Gilbert, 2014) argue that the concept of diversity should be restricted to specific natural categories such as race and gender. Following this narrow understanding, employee diversity is understood as the degree of heterogeneity among employees that is precisely limited to specific cultural attributes such as age, gender and ethnicity (Zhuwao, 2017).

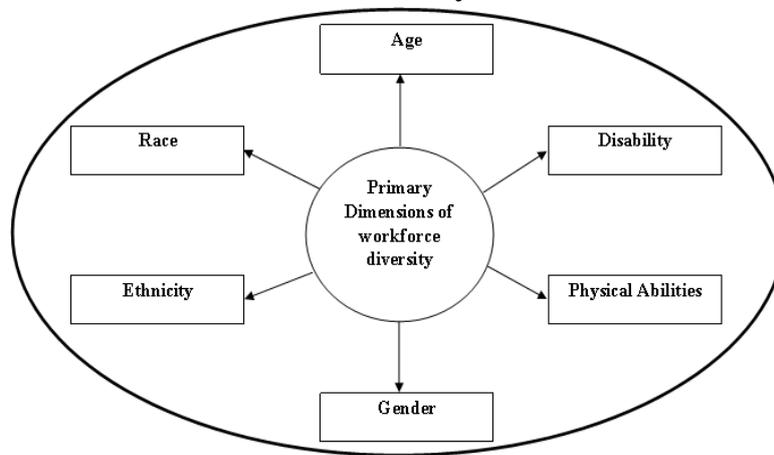
The other extreme end of the continuum of workforce diversity are advocates of a broader view of workforce diversity who include Barak (2016) and Foma (2014). Using a broader understanding, Foma (2014) defines workforce diversity as acknowledging, understanding, accepting, valuing and celebrating differences amongst workers with respect to a whole continuum such as age, class, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, race, political affiliation, sporting interests, economic status, sexual orientation, educational attainment, religion, traditions, cultural beliefs, values and norms, spiritual practices and public assistance status. Therefore, from a broader view, all employees are unique in their own making. Ehimare

and Omankhanlen (2017) argue that if diversity is to be by any nature broader, the simple conclusion that ‘everyone is different’ would be accepted.

2.2 The association between primary dimensions of workforce diversity and employee performance

Primary dimensions of workforce diversity are the in-born dimensions which are not in control of the person and cannot be altered (Makhdoomi & Nika, 2018). Rijamampianina and Carmichael (2005) posit that primary dimensions of diversity are inborn and unchangeable. Ekot (2017) was of the same view with other scholars (Makhdoomi & Nika, 2018; Rijamampianina and Carmichael, 2005). Ekot (2017) reiterates that primary dimensions of workforce diversity cannot be chosen by an individual or may not be dictated by the organisation itself. Figure below diagrammatically depicts the primary dimensions of workforce diversity:

Fig 1: Primary dimensions of workforce diversity



Source: Makhdoomi and Nika (2018).

2.2.1 Age diversity and employee performance

The concept of age has been phenomenal ever since the beginning of human history. Age is prodigious in the family, at schools or any institution. It is also crucial at work places as most workplace activities are characterised by people of different age groups and categories (Gitonga et al. 2016). In line with Azam (2018) there is no institution with employees of the same group, age varies across all aspects of the organisation. Zhakata et al (2017) states that each age group of workers has its own performance behaviours and characteristics, coupled with strengths and weaknesses.

In terms of employee performance, employees below the age of 30 are considered as keen knowledge acquirers. They are open minded and are willing to learn new things and new ways of increasing performance. They are usually high performers and are mainly characterised of school leavers and fresh graduates (Zhuwao, 2017; Gitonga et al. 2016; Busolo, 2017; Azam, 2018).

Employees aged between 40 and 50 years are considered as the rational beings of the organisations. They usually make balanced decisions and their thinking and employee

performance are balanced by work experience and need for excellence (Busolo, 2017). This age category consists of employees who have worked for a significant number of years. The majority of them have switched organisations in the past and so they have vast years of experience. Their experience makes them resourceful. Ekot (2018) suggests that this age group is mainly referred to when new recruits are oriented to the organisational culture.

Employees above the age of 50 are essentially approaching the retirement age. Their priorities usually are mainly focused on life after employment. Some of the employees in this category have rage and regrets over how they have failed to plan well for their retirement. When employees get to this age, they worry more about who will cater for them and worry less about how to enhance employee productivity (Ekot, 2018). This is the most unproductive group of all employees especially when the employees hold non-managerial positions. However, Azam (2018) also indicates that this is the most resourceful age group. Most managers are in this age category as well as most company directors and executives. They have significant experience which they can use to further the performance of the organisation, and of individuals.

2.2.2 Gender diversity and employee performance

Powell (2011) reiterates that gender refers to the physiological inference of someone being either male or female. Expectations and beliefs regarding what kind of attitudes, behaviours, values, knowledge, skills, and interest areas are more peculiar to one gender than the other. When it comes to gender diversity, this relates to the extent to which both male and female employees work together (Ehimare & Ogaga-oghene, 2011). Gender diversity studies agree that differences between males and females are significant enough to lead to organizational dysfunctional or organisational improved performance (Makhdoomi & Nika, 2018; Ogbo, Ukpere & Iyamho, 2014). This follows that males and females respond differently to certain organizational stimuli.

One of the widely cited theories which affects employee performance as a result of gender diversity is the Glass Ceiling Theory. The notion was first coined in 1960 and was used to describe a subtle obstacle that is so clear but yet very powerful that it can hinder women from climbing up the managerial ladder (Ekot, 2017). There is a social and organizational stereotype which belittle women to pursue senior positions in an organisation. According to Mulilima (2018) the Glass Ceiling Theory indicates that the fullest potential of women is not explored and their uttermost level of performance is not reached. In poorly managed and yet diversified organisations, gender diversity is more likely to lead towards stereotypes and discrimination (Ukpere & Iyamho, 2014). Females are usually the main victims as they are at times denied the social support to rise to some organisational positions which are regarded as masculine. However, Gellner and Veen (2019) indicate that some female employees have broken the glass ceiling, accepted and performed well in senior positions.

2.2.3 The effects of Race, Ethnicity and Disability on employee performance.

Organisations today are diverse in the sense that they involve employees from different races and ethnic groups. These groups work together towards realising the organisational goals. Zhuwao (2017) indicates that in South Africa, race and ethnicity were key fundamentals which affected performance. Xenophobia attacks have been rampant affecting the smooth operations

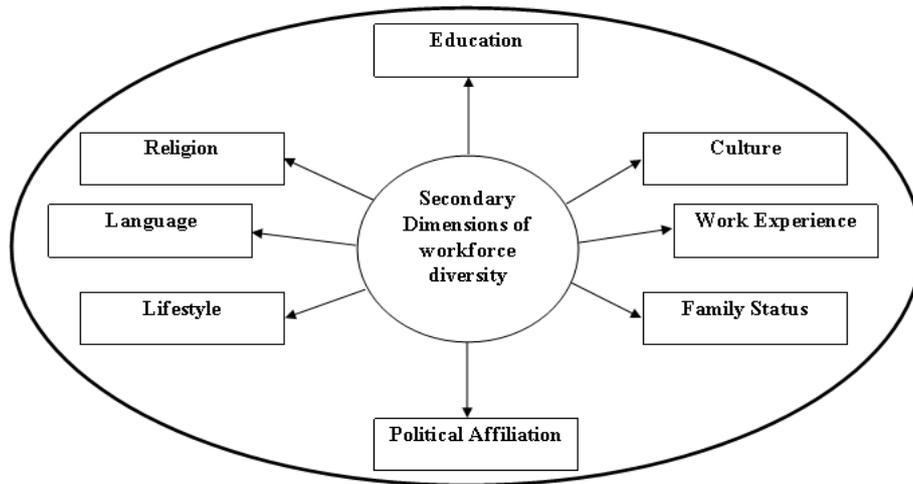
of business in South Africa. Some employees are disabled and some are crippled, whilst others have more physical stamina. Bringing such employees to an organization creates serious diversity as noted by Nicolaidis (2016).

2.3 The association between secondary dimensions of workforce diversity and employee performance

Secondary dimensions of workforce diversity consist of heterogeneous attributes of employees which one can change in life (Rijamampianina & Carmichael, 2005). Rowland (2018) further adds that there are secondary because they are not core aspects of employee identity as they can be changed.

Figure 2 shows aspects that fall under secondary dimensions of workforce diversity.

Fig 2: Secondary dimensions of workforce diversity



Source: *Makhdoomi and Nika (2018).*

2.4 Workforce diversity management strategies

In line with the views of Iqbal et al (2015) the best way to manage workforce diversity is for top management to drive the organisational culture towards a culture of acceptance and harmony of varied employee differences. Ekot (2017) refers to this type of culture as a “culture of inclusion”. If a culture of inclusion is promoted by management, stereotypes and discriminations are eliminated and the seemingly minority groups would be motivated to break the glass ceiling. According Morais, et al. (2014) diversity management is much more than hiring a heterogeneous workforce but more about ensuring that an environment that welcomes, appreciates and respects such diversity is created. Diversity management means recognizing people’s differences and then accept these differences as valuable.

2.5 Theoretical Review

Several theories have been proposed to address the association between workforce diversity and employee performance. Some among these include the heterogeneity theory, the social categorisation theory, the strategic theory and the dimensional theory.

2.5.1 The Heterogeneity Theory

The theory of heterogeneity was put forward by Blau (1977). The main argument of this theory is that employees from a diverse background can produce different results depending on the nature in which their heterogeneity is handled by the organisation. Commenting on this theory, Gitonga et al. (2016) notes that within culturally homogeneous groups, members will tend to communicate with one another more often and in a greater variety of ways resulting in in-group attachments and shared perceptions.

The Heterogeneity Theory also posits that if a homogenous group (on the basis of race, gender, age; among others) of employees works together, maybe within an organisational department or within the entire organisation; that will promote social cohesion.

2.5.2 Social Categorization Theory

The theory of social categorization was put forward by Turner (1987). The theory posits that people belong to many different social groups (such as nation, employer, or school). Turner (1987) suggests that individual groups categorize themselves on the basis of their social identities. Groups are more responsive to activities and information than is related to their social identities and which they purport to be strengthening their cohorts. The model also indicates that within a group of similar social identities, cooperation is high and they tend to be more productive as a group.

Gitonga *et al.* (2016) also note that using the Social Categorization Theory, dissimilar individuals are less likely to collaborate with one another compared to similar individuals. In this way, social categorization may disrupt elaboration of task-relevant information because of possible biases towards in-group members and negative biases towards out-group members. The Turner (1987) theory of social categorization is thus an opposing view of Blau (1977)'s Heterogeneity Theory. As Blau (1977) thought that heterogeneity is functional, Turner (1987) views it as dysfunctional.

2.5.3 Strategic Choice Theory

The Strategic Choice Theory was refined by Roberson and Park (2007). The argument of the theory is that the overall outcome of workforce diversity emanates from the choices and decisions made by top executives of the organisation (Roberson & Park, 2007). The top executives such as the chief executive officers and the managing directors, have the sole role of giving the organization direction in a diversified workplace. CEOs and managing directors own the strategy and they have the choice to make sure employees are integrated. Thus, within the context of top management teams, diversity broadens the range of cognitive perspectives needed to recognize strategic opportunities and consider various strategic choices or alternatives (Gitonga et al., 2016)

2.5.4 Dimensional Theory of Workforce Diversity

This model was largely populated by Rijamampianina and Carmichael (2005). The theory indicates that there are three dimensions of workforce diversity, namely: primary, secondary and tertiary as illustrated on the table below:

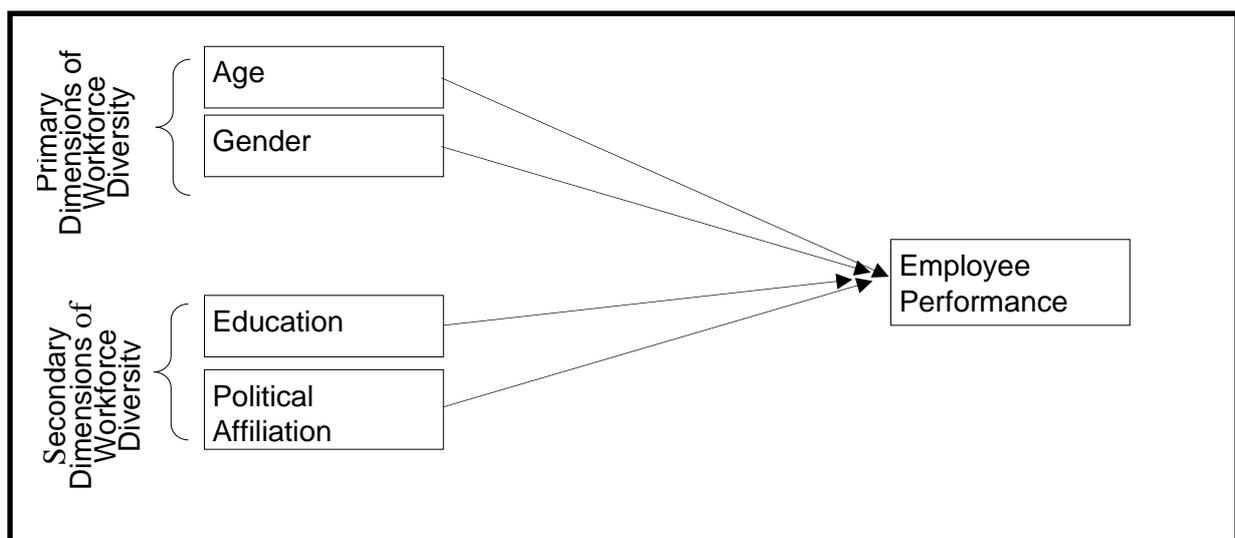
Table 1: Dimensions of workforce diversity

Primary Dimensions	Secondary Dimensions	Tertiary Dimensions
Race Age Ethnicity Disability Gender	Religion Lifestyle Education Economic status Culture Sexual orientation Political orientation Family status Thinking style Geographic origin Work experience Language Nationality	Beliefs Group norms Assumptions Values Perceptions Feelings Attitudes

Source: Rijamampianina and Carmichael (2005)

The Dimensional Theory of Workforce Diversity indicates that diversity is not always permanent, and has various sources. The main advantage of this model is that it paints a clear picture of how diverse workforce diversity can be by taking a holistic view of workforce diversity through the consideration of primary, secondary and tertiary dimensions of diversity. Another prime advantage of the Dimensional Theory of Workforce Diversity is it tries to exhaust a number of diversity items under each dimension of diversity. This makes the model more practical. However, the model is silent on the interaction among the three dimensions of diversity (primary, secondary and tertiary). It is also a mere model of workforce diversity dimensions and is not linked to any outcome variable/s (Makhdoomi & Nika, 2018).

Fig. 3: The Conceptual Framework



Adapted from Rijamampianina and Carmichael (2005)

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This was mixed research strategy which used both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. Driven by the pragmatic research philosophy adopted in this study, the positivist paradigm and the interpretivist paradigm were used to understand phenomena at hand (Saunders et al., 2015). The study adopted a combination of descriptive and explanatory research design which Saunders *et al.* (2009) call *descripto-explanatory research design*.

Table 2: Total number of employees for the three local authorities

Rural Local Authority	Total Number of Employees	Target Population
Chegutu	93	269
Mhondoro Ngezi	122	
Sanyati	54	
TOTAL	269	

Source: ARDCZ (2019)

3.1 Sample Size

To determine a representative sample for the current study, the researcher adopted a sample size model developed by Morgan (1993) in Table 3.

Table 3: Morgan Sample Sizes Extract at 95% confidence interval

Population	Margin of error			
	5%	3.5%	2.5%	1%
200	132	160	177	196
250	152	190	215	244
300	169	217	251	384
400	196	265	318	475

Source: Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009)

The population of the study was 269. Using the Morgan Sample Size Calculator extract above, at 95% confidence interval and at 5% margin of error, the target population of 269 was more than 250 but less than 300. Thus, to ensure exclusive representation the researcher rounded up the target population (269) to the next upper level (300). That led to the selection of a minimum sample size of 169 respondents. Saunders et al. (2009) reiterate that for a quantitative research to be generalisable, the higher the sample size, the better.

Table 4: Sample size per stratum.

Rural Local Authority	Population	Calculations	Stratum Size	Percentage contribution
Chegutu	93	$93/269 \times 169$	58	34%
Mhondoro Ngezi	122	$122/269 \times 169$	77	46%
Sanyati	54	$54/269 \times 169$	34	20%
TOTAL	269		169	

A cross comparison with other workforce diversity researches indicates that other contemporary studies of workforce diversity have also used probability sampling techniques in sampling respondents for their studies (Makhdoomi & Nika, 2018; Zhuwao, 2017; Hedfi-Khayati & Zouaoui, 2013; Busolo, 2017).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate of Respondents

169 questionnaires were distributed in accordance with the sample size using random stratification and 124 were completed and returned giving a response rate of 73.4% which was a high response rate by any standard.

4.2 Reliability of the measuring instrument

The main data collection instrument for the study was a questionnaire. The idea was to validate the study workforce diversity model using five variables namely; Age diversity, gender diversity, educational diversity, political affiliation diversity and employee performance. The extent to which these questions were statistically related to the variable that they were measuring was computed using the Cronbach Alpha Test statistic, and the results are shown in the Table below:

Table 5: Reliability of the measuring instrument.

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Gender Diversity	0.773	5
Age Diversity	0.799	5
Education Diversity	0.813	5
Political Diversity	0.777	5
Employee Performance	0.778	7

Source: SPSS Analysis

The Cronbach Alpha test statistic showed that all variables had a Cronbach Coefficient of 0.773 and above. This proved that all questions under study were measuring their intended variables. George and Mallery (2018) opined that the acceptable values of Cronbach Alpha range between 0.65 and 0.95. Tavakol and Dennick (2011) also suggest that Cronbach Alpha values below 0.50 are unacceptable. Thus, the study concluded that the questionnaire variables were statistically reliable.

4.3 Diversity of workforce of rural district authorities in Mashonaland West Province

The first objective of the study was *to analyse the diversity of workforce of Rural District Authorities in Mashonaland West Province*. The conceptual framework had four types of workforce diversity namely; Gender diversity, age diversity, education diversity and political diversity.

4.3.1 Gender Diversity

One of the aspects of primary workforce diversity is gender. The study sort to ascertain the extent to which workforce was diverse on the basis of gender in Rural Local Authorities. Results showed that the workforce is overly dominated by males who constitute 81.5% of the respondents, with only 18.5% being females. Apparently, the finding contradicts the Rural Local Authorities' own mantra of being 'an equal opportunity employer'.

4.3.2 Age Diversity

The second dimension of workforce diversity understudy was age. The study found interesting results about the heterogeneous nature of the workforce on the basis of age. Noteworthy, was the fact that all age groups were well represented from 18 years to above 55 years. This indicates that the working environment was age diversified. Most employees were in age category of 25 to 34 which represented 46% of the employees follows by 35 to 44 and 45 to 54 which represented 25% and 20.2% of the employees respectively. These results can be interpreted to mean that rural local authorities constitute a mature adult workforce. However, the young ones (18-24 years) and the older ones (55 years and above) were also present with a valid frequency percentage of 4.8% and 4% respectively.

Interviewees also confirmed age diversity. Some of their responses were:

"That's true. If you look around, you see people of different age groups. We recruit all age groups, for as long as the person has the necessary requisite skills and qualifications." -

Interviewee C

"Yes our local authority is age diversified. If I am not mistaken, the oldest employee here is 62 years old yet we have other young employees who are doing their university Attachments and they are in their early 20s. It is an undisputable fact that we are age diversified." -

Interviewee A

4.3.3 Education Diversity

The third diversification dimension understudy was educational diversity which was denoted by the level of education of the workforce. Education diversity is part of the Secondary Dimension of Workforce Diversity. Based on responses from respondents, the majority of employees (39.5%) were diploma holders, followed by 22.6% with degrees and 24.2% with certificates. Only 10.5% of respondents had high school qualifications and 3.2% had post graduate degrees. Interviewees also confirmed diversity on the basis of education. One interviewee notes that:

“We have various job tasks that require various skill levels. This affects our recruitment and we end up recruiting different people with different educational qualifications so as to fulfil different labour activities. This leads to a heterogeneous educational breed of employees.” –

Interviewee B

4.3.4 Political Diversity

The fourth dimension of workforce diversity under study was political diversity. Results showed that respondents do not belong to the same political party, which indicates diversity. This aspect was more pronounced as 72.6% of respondents attested that they belong to different political parties. Only 4.8% were in disagreement with 22.6% being ignorant. Commenting on the relevance of political diversity in rural local authorities, a key informant among interviewees noted:

“Local Authorities are run by politically elected individuals. This goes on to explain how diverse and daunting this aspect of diversification can bring to the workforce”-

Interviewee C

“As the whole nation is made up of different political affiliates, so is our organisation. The challenge here is that because our organisation is politically steered, bootlicking and back-biting are daily chores as individuals aspire to grow through a political muscle.”-

Interviewee A

Very few studies considered political affiliation diversity as the conscious analysis of literature only shows two studies, one by Daniel et al. (2016) and the other by Andrews et al. (2006). Interesting however, is that in these two studies, they all found statistically significant results of the availability of political diversity at workplaces.

4.3.5 Descriptive statistics on employees’ perceptions of workforce diversity

As part of analysis, the study examined descriptive statistics of employees’ perception of workforce diversity dimensions and the results are in Table below:

Table 6: Descriptive statistics of employees’ perception of workforce diversity

		Descriptive Statistics				
		N	Min	Max	Mean	Std Dev
Gender Diversity	My organisation hires both males and females.	124	2	5	3.95	1.139
	Fair treatment is given to all employees, whether they are males or females.	124	1	5	2.53	1.445
	Opportunities for growth and advancement exist for women and men in my organisation.	124	1	5	2.60	1.035
	Women are involved in the organisation’s decision making as much as men.	124	1	5	2.31	1.327
	The organisation’s training and development program is developed to meet the requirements of males and females.	124	2	5	3.19	.951
Gender Diversity Mean Score					2.92	
Age Diversity	My organisation includes all members of different ages in problem solving and decision making.	124	1	4	2.11	1.106
	Different age groups are recruited by my organisation.	124	4	5	4.50	.502
	Working with employees of different age groups does not cause conflict.	124	1	5	2.81	1.166
	I am positive about age diversity in this workplace.	124	2	5	3.35	.920
	The workforce consists of varied age groups.	124	4	5	4.41	.494
Age Diversity Mean Score					3.44	
Education Diversity	The recruitment plan of the organisation is based on the education background of the employees.	124	1	5	4.04	1.405
	The organisation provides paid study leave to employees who further their education.	124	1	5	3.13	1.126
	Opportunities for growth and advancement exist for employees who have lower qualifications in education.	124	1	4	2.13	1.059
	At work, I do not experience lack of confidence due to my education background.	124	1	5	2.52	1.468
	My organisation includes all members at different education level in problem solving and decision making.	124	1	3	1.65	.699
Education Diversity Mean Score					2.69	
Political Diversity	Employees in my organisation belong to different political parties.	124	3	5	4.50	.669
	The recruitment policy at my organisation does not discriminate on the basis of political orientation.	124	1	5	3.85	1.217
	Members of different political parties work together in my organisation.	124	1	5	3.25	1.087
	Employee growth does not relate to political affiliation.	124	1	5	2.65	1.295
	There is employee tolerance among employees on the basis of political affiliation	124	1	5	2.81	1.496
Political Diversity Mean Score					3.41	
Valid N (list-wise)		124				

Source: *Primary Data*

Results in Table 6 above show that the workforce of respondents was overly diversified as explained below:

4.3.5.1 Gender Diversity

The study found a gender diversification mean score of 2.92 which commensurate with the 'neutral' category of the measurement scale. This indicates that employees perceive that gender diversity was present in their organisation though it was moderate. The majority of employees agree that rural local authorities hire both males and females with an undisputable mean score of 3.95 ('agree' category).

4.3.5.2 Age Diversity

The study also confirmed the availability of age diversity on the basis of employee perceptual responses. An age diversity mean score of 3.44 was found and it showed statistical evidence of the presence of age diversity. The respondents indicated that all age groups are recruited by their organisations (mean 4.50) and that the workforce consists of varied age groups (mean 4.41).

4.3.5.3 Education Diversity

Based on perceptual responses of respondents, the study also discovered the existence of education diversity where a mean coefficient of 2.69 was recorded. This was a mediocre score with a bias towards the lower end of the measuring instrument. The result was interpreted to mean that employees disagreed that education diversity does not exist. Heterogeneity was rather found on the basis of education on the aspect of opportunities for growth (mean 2.13).

4.3.5.4 Political Diversity

Descriptive statistics also indicated the existence of the political diversity variable in the target group. The Political Diversity mean score of 3.41 was recorded which was a coefficient strongly biased towards the 'agree' category. The majority of respondents indicated that their organisations had employees belonging to different political parties (mean 4.50 and standard deviation of 0.669). A low standard deviation value indicates that the majority of employee respondents shared the same feeling.

However, the study also found a rather disturbing result that employee growth really depends of one's political affiliation (mean 2.65). This indicates challenges with employee diversity management.

4.4 The effects of primary and secondary dimensions of workforce diversity on employee performance

To answer the research objectives and questions and to substantiate the conceptual framework, the study carried out two main tests namely; Pearson Correlation and Regression analysis. However, for regression analysis to be carried out conclusively, the multi-collinearity assumption had to be tested. This is a test which ensures that independent variables are not too correlated to ensure that there are not similar. Therefore, before proceeding to regression analyses, the collinearity test was run.

Table 7: Collinearity Diagnosis Test Results

Coefficients ^a			
Model		Collinearity Statistics	
		Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)		
	Gender Diversity	.949	1.053
	Age Diversity	.953	1.049
	Education Diversity	.984	1.016
	Political Diversity	.932	1.073
a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance			

To ascertain the multi-collinearity of independent variables, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), statistics were computed. It was noted that all values ranged between 1.016 and 1.073. Siti (2015)’s remarks were used to make a conclusion. According to Siti (2015) if the VIF values are below 5, then the assumption of multi-collinearity would have passed. VIF of above 5 and but below 10 requires further analysis whilst those above 10 violate the regression assumption. Thus, using the Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) test results above, the model passed the regression assumption and proceeded to the regression analysis and correlation analysis.

Table 8: Regression analysis

Table 8(a)

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.824 ^a	.679	.668	.43542
a. Predictors: (Constant), Political Diversity, Education Diversity, Age Diversity, Gender Diversity				

Table 8(b)

ANOVA ^b						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	47.714	4	11.928	62.917	.000 ^a
	Residual	22.561	119	.190		
	Total	70.275	123			
a. Predictors: (Constant), Political Diversity, Education Diversity, Age Diversity, Gender Diversity						
b. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance						

Table 8(c)

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.909	.364		5.245	.000
	Gender Diversity	-.344	.047	-.393	-7.374	.000
	Age Diversity	-.038	.061	-.033	-.619	.537
	Education Diversity	.138	.044	.163	3.114	.002
	Political Diversity	.541	.047	.617	11.465	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance						

Source: Primary Data

Table 9: Correlation between workforce diversity and employee performance

Correlations		
		Employee Performance
Gender Diversity	Pearson Correlation	-.507**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	124
Age Diversity	Pearson Correlation	-.101
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.265
	N	124
Education Diversity	Pearson Correlation	.261**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003
	N	124
Political Diversity	Pearson Correlation	.703**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	124
Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	124
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).		

Source: Primary Data

The discussions of results which follow are based on results in Tables 8 (regression analysis and Table 9 (correlation analysis).

The study predicted that workforce diversity positively affects employee performance. The following pair of hypotheses was overarching:

H₁: Workforce diversity positively affects employee performance

H₀: There is no association between workforce diversity and employee performance

Table 8 (a) presents the model summary. It shows a correlation coefficient of 0.824 between the independent variables (Political Diversity, Education Diversity, Age Diversity, Gender Diversity) and Employee Performance (Dependent variable). This is a strong, and positive association between the dependent and independent variables. This means that if the variables of the model are enhanced, employee performance would significantly be enhanced.

The independent, predictor variables of the study explains Employee performance by 66.8% (Adjusted $r^2 = 0.668$). This shows a high impact of Political Diversity, Education Diversity, Age Diversity, Gender Diversity on Employee Performance. This also implies that the model is a good model to predict Employee Performance. The r^2 value seem relatively smaller, however this is ideal because Employee Performance is also explained by other factors other than the ones in the model.

The F value (Table 8b) shows that the Workforce Diversity model was statistically significant. The p-value of the model was 0.00 which was below the alpha value of 0.05. Therefore, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$.

Therefore, the following decision was made:

Decision: We reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is statistical evidence that workforce diversity of Rural Local Authorities has a positive impact on Employee Performance.

The interpretation of the results is that the more diverse the organisation the more productive it can become. The same result is barraged in literature as most scholars found a positive statistical effect of workforce diversity on employee performance or productivity (Mapuranga & Bukaliya, 2014; Nyamubarwa, 2013; Ncube, 2016; Makhdoomi & Nika, 2018; Alghazo & Shaiban, 2016; Kundu, 2017)

Table 8 (c) shows the Workforce Diversity Determinant variables (Political Diversity, Education Diversity, Age Diversity, Gender Diversity) as well as the coefficients to deduce the regression equation. The Beta Values show the impact of each individual BPR determinant variable on BPR Implementation (Rowland, 2018). The same table presents results of the significance of the association which can then be used to accept or reject the null hypotheses.

Table 9 presents the correlation analysis results. A correlation test measures the association, strength and direction of the relationship. It shows the extent to which variables are related. In other words, it measures causality. The correlation coefficient is a value which is between -1 and 1. The closer the number to 1 the higher the strength of the association. If the association is closer to zero it shows that the association is weak. In addition, the correlation coefficient also shows the direction of the association. If the coefficient is positive, it shows that the association is positive. However, if the correlation is negative, it shows that there is an inverse/negative association (Saunders et al. 2009).

4.4.1 An analysis of the effect of primary dimensions of workforce diversity on employee performance.

The second objective of the study wanted to measure *the effects of the primary dimensions of workforce diversity on employee performance*. The primary dimension of workforce diversity was made up of two variables, gender diversity and age diversity, and the analysis for these two is thus made below:

4.4.1.1 The impact of gender diversity on employee performance

To test the impact of gender diversity on employee performance, the following pair of hypotheses was made:

H₀: There is no association between gender diversity and employee performance.

H₁: Gender diversity affects employee performance.

In line with regression results in Table 8, gender diversity had a negative Beta value of -0.393, with a T value of -7.374 and a p-value of 0.00. This showed that gender diversity significantly and inversely affect employee performance by 39.3%.

At the same time, the correlation coefficient between Gender diversity and Employee performance was -0.507 (Table 9). The coefficient was on the middle of the park between 0 and -1, showing a moderate association. The p-value was also statistically significant at 0.00. The direction of the association was also denoted by the negative sign of the correlation coefficient. The study thus concluded that there was a moderate inverse association between Gender Diversity and Employee Performance.

The following decision was thus made:

Decision: We reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is statistical evidence that gender diversity of Rural Local Authorities has a negative impact on employee performance.

The interpretation of the results is that when gender diversity increased, employee performance is reduced. In other ways, the study found out that employees perform better when they are working with related gender members. Females perform better when they work with fellow females and males perform better when they work with fellow males. Conversely, when gender diversity increases, production goes down.

The result from questionnaire analysis was a bit divergent from interview responses. Interviewees indicate that they felt that both males and females were working together in harmony and they felt that diversity of gender would promote employee performance.

“Here we believe in team work, and each team is made up of both genders. I feel that dilution makes work more serious and reduce unnecessary same gender debates which are counterproductive” - **Interviewee A**

However, a related opinion which explains the questionnaire result was explained by one interviewee, who notes that:

“Some work we do as a Council is very labour intensive. For instance, we dig trenches and repair roads. Naturally, women are not as strong as men and I guess that can cause some disputes if one feels that some group is not performing as they are at equal footing.” -

Interviewee B

4.4.1.2 The impact of age diversity on employee performance

Age diversity is the second aspect of the primary dimension of workforce diversity. The following hypotheses were developed to measure the association between age diversity and employee performance;

H₀: There is no association between age diversity and employee performance.

H₁: Age diversity positively affects employee performance.

Using regression results in Table 4.6, Age Diversity had a negative better coefficient of -0.033, with a T-value of -0.619 and a p-value of 0.537. The p-value was higher than the alpha value (0.537>0.05), and this indicates that the association was not statistically significant. Thus, the study concluded that there was no statistical evidence of the impact of age on employee performance.

A consideration of the Pearson Correlation Test also showed a correlation coefficient of -0.101 and a p-value of 0.265. The P-value was also not statistically significant.

The following decision was thus made:

Decision: We accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no statistical evidence that age diversity in Rural Local Authorities affects employee performance.

The interpretation of the results was that age variations of employees did not affect performance of each individual employee. Performance of employees was not predicted by age diversity.

Two out of three interviewees opined that age diversity does not affect employee performance. They both indicated that whether teams are made of young ones, older ones or a mixed age groups, their output was usually the same. However, Interviewee B felt otherwise. Interviewee B indicated that since some work that the councils do is labour intensive, age matters. Her reasoning was based on the notion that the older the group of employees the lesser productive they become and if employees are of diverse age groups, youthful employees cover for the age ailments of the older employees. Gellner and Veen (2019) found out that age heterogeneity on its own has a negative effect on individual productivity.

4.4.2 An analysis of the effect of secondary dimensions of workforce diversity on employee performance.

The third objective of the study aimed to assess *the effects of the secondary dimension of workforce diversity on employee performance*. Secondary dimension of workforce diversity had two variables namely, *education diversity and political diversity*, and the analysis for these two is thus made below.

4.4.2.1 The impact of Education Diversity on Employee Performance

Education diversity relates to the extent to which the workforce was made up of employees with varied academic qualifications. The effect of education diversity was tested against employee performance based on the following hypotheses:

- H₀: There is no association between Educational Diversity and Employee Performance.
H₁: Educational Diversity positively affects Employee Performance.

Regression and Pearson Correlation test statistics (Tables 4.6 and 4.7) were used to measure the association. The regression results indicated a Beta value of 0.163, T value of 3.114 and a significant p-value of 0.002. This indicates that education diversity explains employee performance by 16.3%.

Conversely, using the Pearson Correlation test results, the study found a correlation coefficient of 0.261 with a p-value of 0.003. This showed a weak association between educational diversity and employee performance, given that the coefficient was closer to zero. However, the association was positive and statistically significant. The following decision was thus made:

Decision: We reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is statistical evidence that educational diversity in Rural Local Authorities has a positive impact on employee performance.

The decision to accept the alternate hypothesis and to reject the null hypothesis meant that in Rural Local Authorities, employees perform better when they are of varied educational backgrounds. However, the impact was low, as well as the association ($r = 0.261$), meaning that educational diversity has a low effect on employee performance. It being a significant association means that it is true that education diversity affects employee performance.

Interview results concur with questionnaire analysis. One interviewee notes:

“A diversified breed of employees means that one’s weaknesses are covered by the academic strengths of the other. This in essence leads to the overly performance of our employees and enhances the quality of their work” -**Interviewee C**

“[After pausing with a big smile], Look here, we are now living in the computer generation. Some of our employees do not even know what a mouse is. So when they work together as a group, their performance is enhanced.” -**Interviewee B**

A study by Ogbo, Ukpere and Iyamho (2014) found related results with the current study. Education diversity was found to be a significant tool that could be effectively utilized in managing workforce diversity to enhance high profitability. The study noted that the higher the educational qualification of respondents, the more positive the employee diversity outcome ($r = 0.67$; $p = 0.02$).

4.4.2.2 The impact of Political Diversity on Employee Performance

The second attribute of the secondary dimension of workforce diversity under study was political affiliation diversity. Political affiliation diversity relates to the extent to which employees are heterogeneous on the basis of their political orientation. With that background, the following pair of hypotheses was developed to test the association between political diversity and employee performance:

- H₀: There is no association between political affiliation diversity and employee performance.

H₁: Political diversity positively affects employee performance.

Regression and correlation test results were used to accept or reject the null hypothesis. Using results in Table 4.6, the regression Beta value of political affiliation diversity was 0.617, with a T-value of 11.465 and a p-value of 0.000. This shows that political diversity predicts employee diversity by 62%.

Using correlation results (Table 4.7), the study computed a correlation coefficient of 0.703 between political affiliation diversity and employee performance. This value was closer to 1 and positive indicating a strong positive association between political affiliation diversity and employee performance. The higher the political diversity the higher the employee performance. The following conclusion was therefore made:

Decision: We reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is statistical evidence that political diversity of Rural Local Authorities has a positive impact on employee performance.

The decision can be interpreted to mean that when employees of Rural Local Authorities work together with other employees with different political affiliations their performance is enhanced. In fact, employee performance was predicted at 62% by political affiliation. If local authorities can improve political affiliation diversity, performance will also increase as attested to by a strong positive correlation coefficient.

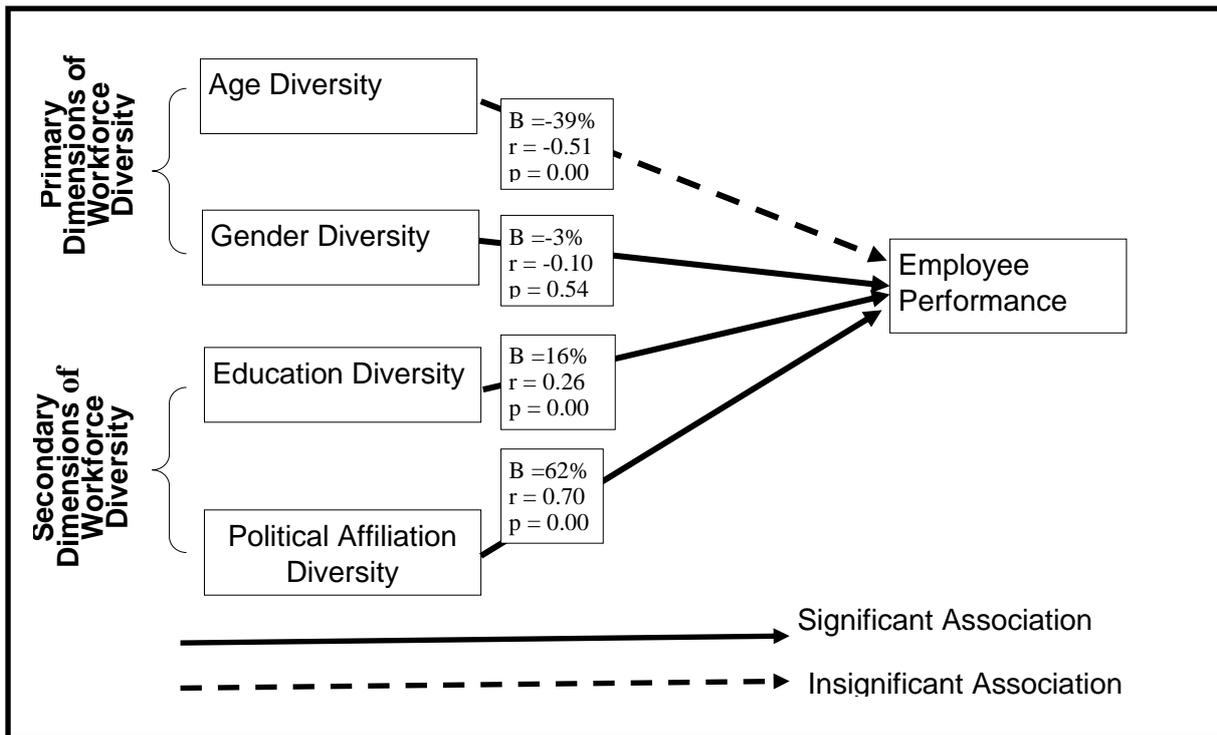
One out of three interviewees felt that political affiliation diversity was counterproductive.

“Employees of different political affiliations spend time on unnecessary debates at work on the basis of their political orientations. At times these discussions are the source of conflict, especially during the political election season and it is difficult to even maintain order at workplace” -Interviewee A

However, the other two interviewees opined that diversification calls for checks and balances which promote quality work and productivity.

5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Figure 3: The results of the tested model of workforce diversity and employee performance



Overall, the study validated the conceptual model of the study. The association between age and employee performance was not statistically significant whilst all the other three associations were statistically significant. Thus, the study concluded that both primary and secondary dimensions of workforce diversity have an effect on employee performance.

Hypotheses conclusions

Workforce diversity positively affects employee performance	<i>Reject null hypothesis</i>
Age diversity affects employee performance.	<i>Accept null hypothesis</i>
Gender diversity positively affects employee performance.	<i>Reject null hypothesis</i>
Educational diversity positively affects employee performance.	<i>Reject null hypothesis</i>
Political Affiliation diversity positively affects employee performance	<i>Reject null hypothesis</i>

There was statistically significant gender imbalance among respondents. The study concluded that both males and females were working together in various work related aspects. Political affiliation was the most impacting form of workforce diversity with a high mean score and a small standard deviation. The median age group was the 35 to 44 year cohort though all other age groups were fairly represented, implying high levels of age diversity. The study also concluded that employees with varied educational backgrounds were working together because Rural Local Authorities hire different skills at different times leading to high levels of educational diversity. Though the study mainly focused on four aspects of workforce diversity, age, gender, education and political affiliation; it was concluded that other forms of workforce

diversity were also present. These included experience diversity and in-service diversity. Conversely, it was also concluded that nationalistic diversity was absent at local authorities given the results that all employees who were part of the survey were Zimbabweans.

The study found out that there was moderate inverse association between gender diversity and employee performance. This meant that when gender diversity increased, employee performance was reduced. Therefore, it was concluded that male employees preferred working with their male counter parts whilst females preferred working with fellow females.

It was the finding of the study that there was no statistical evidence of the impact of age on employee performance. Age diversity did not affect employee performance either negatively or positively. The same notion was also supported by interviewees.

The study concluded that employees perform better when they are of varied educational backgrounds. The association between education diversity and employee performance was statistically significant and the conclusion was made that education diversity predicts employee performance to a lower extent.

In terms of political diversity, the study found out that political diversity predicts employee diversity by 62%. Employees perform better when they belong to different political parties. Interviewees made it clearer that the phenomena were like that because political diversity offers checks and balances which improves productivity.

The study concluded that the attributes that employees can change in life have a positive effect on employee performance. The conclusion meant that it is advantageous for the Rural Local Authorities to have workforce diversity on the basis of the secondary dimension of workforce diversity.

5.2 Recommendations

Given the statistical based findings and conclusions in this study, the following recommendations were made:

- 5.2.1 Employers should treat different employees differently so as to tap the best out of workforce diversity.
- 5.2.2 Employees should be trained to be tolerant of the differences among themselves.
- 5.2.3 On educational diversity, the study recommends the mixture of employees with varied educational backgrounds so that they work together. This promotes a synergistic approach to human capital management as the educational deficiencies of others are covered by the competences of others.
- 5.2.4 On political diversity, the study recommends the elimination of discrimination on the basis of political affiliation. The study found out that the more political heterogeneous the employees are the more productive they become.

5.3 Areas of further studies

This study focused only on two primary attributes and two secondary attributes of workforce diversity. The study recommends future research to broaden the model to include other

variables of primary and secondary workforce diversity such as physical disability, ethnicity, nationality, physical ability, culture, family status, religion, lifestyle and language.

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