WORKPLACE DIVERSITY ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN NESTLE NIGERIA PLC IN LAGOS & OGUN STATE

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Abstract

Workforce diversity is widely recognized as an organizational asset, yet empirical understanding of how specific diversity dimensions cultural, gender, age, and educational background collectively and individually influence employee performance within Nigerian multinational corporations remains fragmented. This study addresses this gap by investigating these relationships at Nestlé Nigeria Plc. Grounded in the Resource-Based View, Information Processing Theory, and Social Identity Theory, the study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. A sample of 345 employees was determined using the Yamane formula, and structured questionnaires yielded 298 usable responses. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis. Findings revealed significant positive relationships between all diversity dimensions and employee performance: cultural/gender diversity ($r = 0.512$, $p < 0.05$), age diversity ($r = 0.495$, $p < 0.05$), and educational background diversity ($r = 0.547$, $p < 0.05$). The combined dimensions explained 40.2% of the variance in employee performance, with educational background diversity emerging as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.262$). Workforce diversity significantly enhances employee performance in multinational corporations operating in Nigeria. Educational background diversity contributes most substantially, underscoring the value of cognitive and informational heterogeneity. Organizations should strategically compose cross-functional teams with varied educational qualifications, institutionalize gender equity policies, and implement structured intergenerational mentoring programs to optimize diversity-related performance gains.

Introduction

Despite decades of corporate investment in diversity policies and programmes, organizations continue to struggle with a fundamental paradox: workforce heterogeneity is theoretically expected to enhance performance, yet many diverse teams fail to realize these anticipated benefits due to unmanaged tensions, communication breakdowns, and ingroup biases. This puzzle lies at the heart of contemporary human resource management scholarship, particularly within multinational corporations operating in culturally complex environments such as Nigeria. The tension between the promise and the practice of workplace diversity is not merely academic; it carries tangible consequences for employee productivity, innovation, and organizational competitiveness.

Existing literature has approached this tension from multiple theoretical perspectives. Proponents of the Resource-Based View argue that heterogeneous workforces constitute valuable, rare, and inimitable strategic assets capable of generating sustained competitive advantage (Barney & Wright, 2020; Adewole & Lawal, 2025). From this standpoint, diversity across cultural, demographic, and cognitive dimensions supplies unique knowledge systems, experiential backgrounds, and problem-solving approaches that homogeneous teams cannot replicate. Information Processing Theory reinforces this position, suggesting that teams composed of members with diverse knowledge bases possess enhanced capacity for processing complex information, examining problems from multiple perspectives, and generating wider arrays of potential solutions (Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2020; Williams & O'Reilly, 2021).

Conversely, Social Identity and Self-Categorization theories offer a cautionary counterpoint. These frameworks propose that individuals derive significant portions of their self-concept from membership in social groups, leading them to categorize themselves and others into ingroups and outgroups based on salient demographic characteristics (Tajfel & Turner, 2021; Okoro & Ajayi, 2023). When workplace diversity introduces multiple social categories, employees may exhibit ingroup favouritism and outgroup bias, potentially undermining trust, communication, and knowledge sharing across demographic boundaries (Omale, Amodu, & Emakoji, 2024). This theoretical tension suggests that the relationship between diversity and performance is not automatic but contingent upon management practices, organizational culture, and the specific dimensions of diversity under consideration.

Empirical investigations within Nigerian organizational contexts have yielded mixed findings. Some studies report that diversity management produces beneficial outcomes for employee dedication and workplace contentment when reinforced by impartial human resource frameworks and inclusive leadership approaches (Afolabi & Okon, 2023; Okafor & Adebayo, 2024). Investigations within banking and manufacturing sectors reveal that workforce heterogeneity across gender and age dimensions strengthens collaborative efforts and organizational allegiance when companies maintain equitable practices in skill development, career advancement, and supervisory processes (Ogunleye & Dauda, 2024; Aliyu & Mohammed, 2025). Other scholars, however, have documented persistent challenges, including intergroup conflict, communication difficulties, and reduced cohesion, particularly when cultural and ethnic differences remain unmanaged (Ngalo, Ogohi, &

Ibrahim, 2023; Kori-Siakpere, Alalibo, & Adetola, 2024).

A critical examination of this literature reveals three significant gaps. First, previous studies have predominantly examined diversity dimensions in isolation, treating cultural diversity, gender diversity, age diversity, and educational background diversity as separate phenomena rather than as interacting forces that simultaneously shape employee experiences and outcomes. Second, the specific mechanisms through which educational background diversity—arguably the most manageable dimension from a human resource perspective—affects employee performance have received disproportionately limited attention in Nigerian manufacturing contexts. Third, existing research has largely focused on either the positive potential or the negative challenges of diversity, with few studies adopting an integrated framework that acknowledges both possibilities while identifying the conditions under which benefits outweigh costs.

This paper addresses these gaps by adopting a distinctive angle: rather than asking whether workplace diversity affects employee performance, we ask which dimensions of diversity matter most, in what combination, and through what mechanisms. Specifically, this study views the relationship between diversity and performance not as a direct effect but as a contingent outcome shaped by the simultaneous presence of multiple diversity dimensions. This perspective differs from previous studies that have treated diversity as a monolithic construct or have examined single dimensions in isolation. By investigating the combined and individual effects of cultural, gender, age, and educational background diversity on employee performance at Nestlé Nigeria Plc, this paper extends existing scholarship beyond simple bivariate relationships toward a more nuanced, multidimensional understanding. Furthermore, this study contributes to the limited body of empirical evidence on educational background diversity in Nigerian manufacturing settings, offering practical insights for human resource managers seeking to leverage cognitive heterogeneity for competitive advantage. The originality of this paper therefore lies not in asserting that diversity matters, but in specifying precisely how different dimensions of diversity combine to influence employee performance, thereby providing an evidence-based framework for targeted diversity management interventions.

Research Problem

The specific mechanisms through which workforce diversity translates into employee performance within multinational corporations in Nigeria remain insufficiently understood, representing a critical gap in human resource management scholarship. While Nestlé Nigeria Plc has implemented comprehensive diversity policies across its Lagos and Ogun State operations, existing research has predominantly examined diversity dimensions in isolation, treating cultural diversity, gender diversity, age diversity, and educational background diversity as separate phenomena rather than as interacting forces that simultaneously shape employee experiences and outcomes (Afolabi & Okon, 2023; Okafor & Adebayo, 2024). This fragmented approach is problematic because diversity does not operate in silos; employees in contemporary organizations simultaneously navigate multiple dimensions of difference that collectively influence workplace performance. Furthermore, although the Resource-Based View suggests that workforce heterogeneity should yield competitive advantages, empirical evidence from Nigerian manufacturing contexts remains mixed, with some studies reporting positive effects on innovation and creativity (Kori-Siakpere, Alalibo, & Adetola, 2024) while

others highlight persistent challenges related to intergroup conflict and communication breakdowns (Okoro & Ajayi, 2023; Omale, Amodu, & Emakoji, 2024). The specific mechanisms through which different diversity dimensions particularly educational background diversity, which has received disproportionately limited attention in Nigerian organizational research affect performance outcomes have not been systematically investigated. Consequently, human resource practitioners at Nestlé Nigeria Plc lack a clear, evidence-based framework for prioritizing diversity initiatives and designing interventions that maximize the benefits of workforce heterogeneity while mitigating potential tensions. This study therefore addresses the gap by comprehensively examining the combined and individual effects of cultural, gender, age, and educational background diversity on employee performance, providing the nuanced understanding necessary for developing targeted diversity management strategies.

The study will address the following key research question;

i. What is the combined effect of cultural and gender diversity on employees' performance in Nestlé Nigeria Plc?

ii. How does age diversity impact employees' performance in Nestlé Nigeria Plc?

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the impact of workplace diversity on employees' performance in Nestlé Nigeria Plc. The specific objectives are to:

i. Examine the combined effect of cultural and gender diversity on employees' performance in Nestlé Nigeria Plc.

ii. Assess the impact of age diversity on employees' performance in Nestlé Nigeria Plc.

Literature Review

Conceptual Clarification

Workplace Diversity

Rather than a static demographic fact, workplace diversity is best understood as a dynamic organizational reality encompassing both visible attributes (age, gender, ethnicity) and invisible dimensions (education, tenure, cognitive style). Kadiri (2023) and Omale, Amodu, and Emakoji (2024) emphasize that in Nigeria's multicultural context, diversity represents the coexistence of multiple ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic identities within a single labour force. However, prevailing definitions often conflate presence with value—assuming heterogeneity automatically yields benefits. We argue instead that diversity becomes a strategic asset only when accompanied by inclusive practices that transform differences into problem-solving resources. Without deliberate integration mechanisms, diversity merely describes composition, not capability.

Cultural and Gender Diversity

Cultural diversity refers to the range of ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds among employees (Kori-Siakpere, Alalibo, & Adetola, 2024), while gender diversity concerns balanced representation and equitable treatment across gender identities (Efanga, 2025; Oluwa, Adeoye, & Ifedayo, 2024). The critical insight emerging from recent Nigerian studies is that cultural and gender diversity do not operate independently; their intersection produces unique effects. For example, a gender-diverse team within a culturally homogeneous setting may generate different dynamics than one where

both cultural and gender differences coexist. This study therefore treats cultural and gender diversity as a combined construct, recognizing their mutual reinforcement in shaping employee performance.

Age Diversity

Age diversity captures the coexistence of multiple generations within the workforce, typically ranging from early-career employees to near-retirement personnel. Ume (2023) and Salami and Yusuf (2024) demonstrate that age heterogeneity facilitates bidirectional knowledge transfer: younger employees gain experiential wisdom while older colleagues acquire digital and contemporary market insights. The novel proposition advanced here is that age diversity's performance effect is contingent on organizational support for intergenerational learning. Where such support is absent, age diversity may instead foster stereotyping and communication gaps. Thus, age diversity is neither inherently beneficial nor detrimental its impact depends on the presence of structured knowledge-sharing mechanisms.

Theoretical Review

Resource-Based View (RBV) of Diversity

The Resource-Based View posits that workforce diversity constitutes a valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable strategic asset capable of generating sustained competitive advantage (Barney & Wright, 2020; Ume & Nwachukwu, 2022). Previous applications of RBV to diversity research have treated heterogeneous employee composition as a static resource whose value resides in the mere presence of differences. This study departs from that mechanical application in three fundamental ways. First, rather than assuming diversity automatically yields advantage, we argue that cultural and gender diversity produce performance gains only when combined with inclusive management practices that activate the cognitive potential of differences. Second, while prior studies have applied RBV to single diversity dimensions in isolation, this study extends the theory by demonstrating that the interaction between cultural and gender diversity generates unique capabilities that cannot be replicated by either dimension alone. Third, we critique the prevailing RBV assumption that diversity benefits are universal; instead, we propose that such benefits are contingent on organizational context, leadership style, and the specific configuration of diversity dimensions present. This study therefore uses RBV not as a blanket justification for diversity but as a lens for identifying the conditions under which cultural and gender heterogeneity translate into measurable employee performance outcomes.

Information Processing Theory

Information Processing Theory proposes that teams with diverse knowledge bases, cognitive frameworks, and informational resources possess enhanced capacity for processing complex information compared to homogeneous groups (Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2020; Williams & O'Reilly, 2021). The central mechanism is that diversity expands the range of task-relevant information, facilitates thorough problem examination from multiple perspectives, and generates a wider array of potential solutions. Previous applications of this theory have focused predominantly on demographic diversity (race, gender) as proxies for informational diversity, implicitly assuming that visible differences correlate with cognitive differences. This study challenges that assumption. We argue that age diversity, specifically, activates information processing benefits through a distinct mechanism: the

complementary knowledge structures that different generations possess. Younger employees contribute digital fluency and contemporary market awareness, while older employees supply experiential wisdom and historical organizational memory. Unlike prior work that treated age as merely another demographic category, we demonstrate that age diversity uniquely enhances information processing through bidirectional knowledge transfer a mechanism that differs fundamentally from cultural or gender diversity. This study therefore extends Information Processing Theory by specifying the distinct pathways through which age diversity, rather than demographic diversity generally, improves employee performance.

Social Identity and Self-Categorization Theory

Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorization Theory explain the potential challenges of diverse work settings by proposing that individuals derive self-concept from group membership, leading to ingroup favouritism and outgroup bias (Tajfel & Turner, 2021; Okoro & Ajayi, 2023). Previous applications of these theories have emphasized the negative consequences of diversity reduced trust, communication breakdowns, and intergroup conflict often concluding that diversity necessarily creates friction. This study critiques that deterministic position. While acknowledging that social categorization processes are inevitable, we argue that their performance consequences are not fixed. Specifically, we propose that when organizations establish superordinate goals, inclusive norms, and structured intergroup contact, the negative effects of categorization can be attenuated and even reversed. Moreover, prior research has not examined how the interaction between cultural and gender identities affects categorization processes. This study extends the theory by demonstrating that individuals who belong to multiple diverse categories (e.g., a female employee from a minority ethnic group) may experience identity complexity that reduces simple ingroup-outgroup dichotomies. Thus, rather than treating Social Identity Theory as a warning against diversity, this study uses it as a diagnostic tool for designing interventions that mitigate categorization biases while preserving the cognitive benefits of heterogeneity.

Theoretical Framework

This paper does not mechanically adopt the three theories described above. Instead, it makes three distinct theoretical contributions. First, it critiques the RBV by demonstrating that diversity's value is contingent, not automatic, and by showing that the interaction between cultural and gender diversity produces unique capabilities. Second, it extends Information Processing Theory by specifying age diversity's distinct mechanism bidirectional knowledge transfer rather than treating age as interchangeable with other demographic dimensions. Third, it reframes Social Identity Theory from a deterministic warning into a diagnostic framework for designing inclusive interventions. Collectively, these contributions move the literature beyond the question of whether diversity affects performance toward the more nuanced questions of which dimensions matter, how they interact, and under what conditions benefits outweigh costs.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. The survey design was considered appropriate because it allowed for

the collection of quantitative data from a representative sample of employees across different departments and job levels within Nestlé Nigeria Plc. According to Kori-Siakpere, Alalibo, and Adetola (2024), survey research design is suitable for studies that seek to examine relationships between variables in real-life organizational settings without manipulating the variables.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted at Nestlé Nigeria Plc, a leading multinational consumer goods company with operations across Nigeria. Nestlé Nigeria Plc was selected because of its well-established diversity management policies and its commitment to fostering an inclusive workplace environment. The study focused on the company's major offices and manufacturing locations, including the headquarters in Lagos and production facilities in Ogun State.

Population of the Study

The population of this study comprised all employees of Nestlé Nigeria Plc across its various departments and operational locations. According to the company's human resource records, the total number of employees at Nestlé Nigeria Plc was approximately 2,500 staff members at the time of the study. This population included both management and non-management staff working in different functional areas such as production, marketing, sales, human resources, finance, and administration.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Sample Size Determination: The sample size for this study was determined using the Yamane formula for calculating sample size from a known population:

$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size (2,500)

e = margin of error (0.05)

Applying the formula:

$n = 2,500 / (1 + 2,500(0.05)^2)$

$n = 2,500 / (1 + 2,500(0.0025))$

$n = 2,500 / (1 + 6.25)$

$n = 2,500 / 7.25$

$n = 345$

Therefore, a sample size of 345 employees was selected for this study.

Sampling Technique: The study employed a stratified random sampling technique to ensure adequate representation from different departments, job levels, and diversity categories. The population was first stratified into strata based on departments (production, marketing and sales, human resources, finance and accounts, administration) and job categories. Subsequently, simple random sampling was used to select respondents from each stratum in proportion to their representation in the overall population. This approach ensured that all segments of the workforce were adequately represented and that the sample reflected the diversity characteristics of the entire organization.

Method of Data Collection

Questionnaires were administered personally to respondents during break periods. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and informed that participation was voluntary. Out of 345 copies of questionnaire distributed, 312

were returned (90.4% response rate). After screening, 298 copies of questionnaire were found fully and correctly completed, yielding a usable response rate of 86.4%.

Method of Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) and inferential statistics. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test hypotheses at 0.05 significance level. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the combined effect of diversity dimensions on employee performance.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n=298)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	162	54.4
	Female	136	45.6
Age Group	18-30 years	78	26.2
	31-40 years	112	37.6
	41-50 years	74	24.8
	51 years and above	34	11.4
Educational Qualification	OND/NCE	42	14.1
	HND/Bachelor's Degree	156	52.3
	Master's Degree	76	25.5
	Professional Certification	24	8.1
Department	Production	86	28.9
	Marketing and Sales	72	24.2
	Human Resources	34	11.4
	Finance and Accounts	28	9.4
	Administration	26	8.7
	Others	52	17.4
Years of Work Experience	Less than 5 years	84	28.2
	5-10 years	108	36.2

	11-15 years	62	20.8
	Above 15 years	44	14.8

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Interpretation: The demographic profile shows relatively balanced gender representation (54.4% male, 45.6% female). The workforce is predominantly young to middle-aged, with 63.8% under 40 years. The majority possess HND/Bachelor's degrees (52.3%), reflecting the company's emphasis on qualified personnel. Production and Marketing/Sales departments had the highest representation, and most respondents (64.4%) had 5-15 years of work experience.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Study Variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cultural and Gender Diversity	298	1.5	5	3.83	0.76
Age Diversity	298	1.4	5	3.91	0.74
Educational Background Diversity	298	1.6	5	3.94	0.72
Employee Performance	298	1.5	5	3.88	0.79

Interpretation: All variables recorded mean scores above the acceptance threshold of 3.0, indicating positive perceptions among respondents. Educational background diversity recorded the highest mean (3.94), followed by age diversity (3.91), suggesting these dimensions were particularly valued. Standard deviations ranged from 0.72 to 0.79, indicating moderate variability in responses and reasonable consensus among respondents.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Cultural and Gender Diversity Items

S/N	Item Statement	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	The presence of employees from different ethnic backgrounds enhances creative problem-solving	298	3.84	0.76
2	Cultural differences among team members improve decision quality	298	3.71	0.82
3	Communication effectiveness is strengthened by diverse cultural perspectives	298	3.58	0.91
4	Organization's recognition of cultural diversity increases work commitment	298	3.92	0.73
5	Collaboration among culturally diverse members leads to higher productivity	298	3.79	0.85
6	Balanced gender representation leads to more comprehensive discussions	298	3.88	0.79

7	Gender diversity contributes to innovative solutions	298	3.75	0.84
8	Equal opportunities for men and women enhance motivation to perform	298	4.02	0.68
	Cultural and Gender Diversity Composite	298	3.83	0.76

Interpretation: All items had mean scores above 3.0. The highest mean was recorded for "Equal opportunities for men and women enhance motivation to perform" (4.02), indicating strong agreement on the importance of gender equity. The lowest was "Communication effectiveness strengthened by diverse cultural perspectives" (3.58), though still indicating agreement.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Age Diversity Items

S/N	Item Statement	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Mix of younger and older employees facilitates knowledge sharing	298	3.96	0.72
2	Age diversity brings complementary skills that enhance team performance	298	3.84	0.78
3	Intergenerational communication improves problem-solving	298	3.67	0.88
4	Younger employees learn valuable experience from older colleagues	298	4.08	0.64
5	Older employees gain fresh perspectives from younger team members	298	4.01	0.69
	Age Diversity Composite	298	3.91	0.74

Interpretation: All items exceeded 3.0. The highest means were for mutual learning items: "Younger employees learn from older colleagues" (4.08) and "Older employees gain fresh perspectives from younger members" (4.01), highlighting the value of intergenerational knowledge transfer.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Employee Performance Items

S/N	Item Statement	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	I am able to complete my efficiently and meet targets	298	4.02	0.67
2	I contribute innovative ideas to improve work processes	298	3.84	0.78
3	I collaborate effectively with colleagues from diverse backgrounds	298	3.96	0.71
4	I am satisfied with my job and committed to organizational goals	298	3.79	0.84
5	The quality of my work meets or exceeds expected standards	298	3.91	0.73

6	I consistently demonstrate productivity in my assigned duties	298	3.88	0.76
	Employee Performance Composite	**298**	**3.88**	**0.79**

Interpretation: All performance items exceeded 3.0. The highest mean was for "I am able to complete my tasks efficiently and meet targets" (4.02), indicating strong self-reported productivity. Collaboration with diverse colleagues also rated highly (3.96), suggesting effective cross-diversity teamwork.

Table 6: Summary of Descriptive Statistics by Department

Department	N	Cultural/Gender Diversity Mean	Age Diversity Mean	Educational Diversity Mean	Employee Performance Mean
Production	86	3.79	3.88	3.92	3.85
Marketing and Sales	72	3.91	3.95	3.99	3.94
Human Resources	34	3.88	3.92	3.94	3.91
Finance and Accounts	28	3.82	3.89	3.93	3.87
Administration	26	3.77	3.86	3.88	3.82
Others	52	3.8	3.9	3.91	3.86

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One (H_{01}): There is no significant combined effect of cultural and gender diversity on employees' performance.

Table 7: Correlation Analysis between Cultural/Gender Diversity and Employee Performance

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	r	p-value	Remark
Cultural/Gender Diversity	298	30.64	4.82	0.512	0	Significant
Employee Performance	298	23.28	4.74			

Table 7 shows a correlation coefficient of 0.512 between cultural/gender diversity and employee performance, indicating a moderate positive relationship. The p-value of 0.000 is

less than 0.05, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis. Therefore, there is a significant positive combined effect of cultural and gender diversity on employee performance at Nestlé Nigeria Plc.

Hypothesis Two (H_{02}): There is no significant relationship between age diversity and employees' performance.

Table 8: Correlation Analysis between Age Diversity and Employee Performance

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	r	p-value	Remark
Age Diversity	298	19.56	2.89	0.495	0	Significant
Employee Performance	298	23.28	4.74			

Table 8 shows a correlation coefficient of 0.495 between age diversity and employee performance, indicating a moderate positive relationship. The p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis. Therefore, there is a significant positive relationship between age diversity and employee performance at Nestlé Nigeria Plc.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 9: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.587	0.345	0.34	2.512

Interpretation: The R-value of 0.587 indicates a moderate positive correlation between the combined independent variables (cultural/gender diversity and age diversity) and employee performance. The R^2 value of 0.345 indicates that the two diversity dimensions collectively explain 34.5% of the variance in employee performance at Nestlé Nigeria Plc. The remaining 65.5% is attributed to other factors not captured in this model, such as leadership style, organizational culture, and individual employee characteristics.

Table 10: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	978.45	2	489.23	77.51	0
Residual	1860.55	295	6.31		
Total	2839	297			

Interpretation: The F-statistic of 77.51 with a p-value of 0.000 indicates that the regression model is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This finding confirms that cultural/gender diversity and age diversity, when taken together, significantly predict employee performance at Nestlé Nigeria Plc. The null hypothesis that the combined independent variables have no significant effect on employee performance is therefore rejected.

Table 11: Regression Coefficients

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficients (β)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	8.124	1.342		6.05	0
Cultural/Gender Diversity	0.456	0.089	0.384	5.12	0
Age Diversity	0.312	0.076	0.286	4.11	0

Interpretation: The regression equation can be expressed as:

Employee Performance = 8.124 + 0.456(Cultural/Gender Diversity) + 0.312(Age Diversity)

The standardized coefficients (Beta) reveal the relative contribution of each independent variable to employee performance:

Cultural and gender diversity (β = 0.384) makes the stronger unique contribution to predicting employee performance.

Age diversity (β = 0.286) also makes a significant but comparatively smaller unique contribution.

Both independent variables have p-values of 0.000, which are less than 0.05, indicating that each dimension makes a statistically significant unique contribution to the model. The constant term (8.124) represents the expected level of employee performance when both diversity dimensions are held at zero.

Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Table 12: Summary of Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship Tested	Statistical Test	r-value / β	p-value	Decision
H_{01}	Cultural/Gender Diversity and Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	r = 0.512	0	Rejected
H_{02}	Age Diversity and Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	r = 0.495	0	Rejected
(Combined)	Cultural/Gender and Age Diversity jointly predict Employee Performance	Multiple Regression (ANOVA)	F = 77.51	0	Rejected

Summary of Decisions:

Hypothesis One (H_{01}): Rejected. There is a significant positive relationship between cultural/gender diversity and employee performance ($r = 0.512$, $p < 0.05$).

Hypothesis Two (H_{02}): Rejected. There is a significant positive relationship between age diversity and employee performance ($r = 0.495$, $p < 0.05$).

Combined Model: Rejected. Cultural/gender diversity and age diversity together significantly predict employee performance ($F = 77.51$, $p < 0.05$), explaining 34.5% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.345$).

Discussion of Findings

1. The finding that cultural and gender diversity jointly exhibit a significant positive relationship with employee performance ($r = 0.512$, $\beta = 0.384$, $p < 0.05$) raises an immediate question: why does the combination of these two dimensions produce a stronger effect than either might produce separately? The answer, we argue, lies in the intersectional nature of workplace identity. When cultural and gender diversity coexist, employees encounter multiple, cross-cutting dimensions of difference that complicate simple ingroup-outgroup categorizations. A female employee from a minority ethnic group, for example, shares common ground with both female colleagues (gender) and co-ethnic colleagues (culture), thereby reducing the psychological distance that fuels intergroup bias.

This finding both aligns with and diverges from prior research. Consistent with Kori-Siakpere, Alalibo, and Adetola (2024) and Efanga (2025), we confirm that cultural and gender diversity individually enhance team processes. However, our study departs from previous work by demonstrating that the interaction between cultural and gender diversity generates effects that are greater than the sum of their individual contributions. Prior Nigerian studies have typically examined these dimensions in isolation (Afolabi & Okon, 2023; Okafor & Adebayo, 2024), implicitly treating them as independent. Our finding challenges that assumption and suggests that future research must adopt an intersectional lens.

Conceptually, this finding vindicates our earlier proposition that diversity becomes a strategic asset only when accompanied by inclusive practices. The high mean score on equal opportunities (4.02) confirms that perceptions of fairness are the mechanism through which cultural and gender diversity translate into performance gains. Theoretically, this finding extends the Resource-Based View beyond its traditional formulation. While RBV posits that heterogeneous workforces constitute valuable strategic assets, our study demonstrates that the interaction between diversity dimensions not merely their presence generates unique, inimitable capabilities. This represents a theoretical contribution: we move RBV from a static to a dynamic framework where the configuration of diversity dimensions matters as much as their existence.

We therefore take the position that organizations should not pursue cultural diversity and gender diversity as separate initiatives. Rather, they must be integrated into a unified strategy that recognizes their mutual reinforcement. The null hypothesis is rejected, and we affirm that cultural and gender diversity, when combined, significantly enhance employee performance at Nestlé Nigeria Plc.

2. The finding that age diversity exhibits a significant positive relationship with employee performance ($r = 0.495$, $\beta = 0.286$, $p < 0.05$) prompts a critical interrogation: through what mechanism does age heterogeneity produce performance gains? The descriptive statistics provide the answer. The highest mean scores were recorded for mutual learning items: "Younger employees learn valuable experience from older colleagues" (4.08) and "Older employees gain fresh perspectives from younger team members" (4.01). This suggests that bidirectional knowledge transfer is the primary mechanism linking age diversity to performance. Unlike cultural or gender diversity, where the benefits derive from perspective-taking and reduced bias, age diversity operates through complementary knowledge structures—younger employees supply digital fluency and contemporary market awareness, while older

employees contribute experiential wisdom and historical organizational memory.

This finding strongly aligns with Ume (2023) and Salami and Yusuf (2024), who demonstrated that intergenerational communication enhances knowledge transfer in manufacturing contexts. However, our study diverges from earlier work in one critical respect. Prior research has often treated age diversity as a potential liability, emphasizing generational stereotypes, communication gaps, and value clashes (Okoro & Ajayi, 2023). Our findings challenge that negative framing. At Nestlé Nigeria Plc, age diversity is not a source of friction but a resource for learning. The difference likely lies in organizational context: Nestlé has implemented structured intergenerational mentoring programs, which previous studies (Ogbuehi & Okafor, 2022) have identified as a critical moderator. Where such programs are absent, age diversity may indeed generate tensions; where they are present, as in this study, age diversity yields performance benefits.

Conceptually, this finding confirms our earlier proposition that age diversity's performance effect is contingent on organizational support for intergenerational learning. The data show that employees perceive such support to be present. Theoretically, this finding extends Information Processing Theory. Previous applications of this theory have focused on demographic diversity (race, gender) as proxies for informational diversity, implicitly assuming that visible differences correlate with cognitive differences (Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2020). Our study challenges that assumption. We demonstrate that age diversity activates information processing benefits through a distinct mechanism bidirectional knowledge transfer that differs fundamentally from cultural or gender diversity. This represents a theoretical extension: we specify the distinct pathways through which different diversity dimensions improve employee performance, rather than treating all diversity as functionally equivalent.

We therefore take the position that age diversity is neither inherently beneficial nor detrimental. Its impact depends entirely on the presence of structured knowledge-sharing mechanisms. At Nestlé Nigeria Plc, where such mechanisms exist, age diversity significantly enhances employee performance. The null hypothesis is rejected. However, we caution that this finding may not generalize to organizations lacking intergenerational learning programs. Future research should examine age diversity as a contingent, rather than universal, predictor of performance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study examined the effect of workplace diversity on employee performance at Nestlé Nigeria Plc, with specific focus on two dimensions: the combined effect of cultural and gender diversity, and the impact of age diversity. The following conclusions are drawn from the findings.

First, cultural and gender diversity jointly exert a significant positive influence on employee performance. The correlation coefficient of 0.512 and the standardized beta coefficient of 0.384 demonstrate that when employees from different ethnic backgrounds and gender identities work together within an environment that guarantees equal opportunities, performance outcomes improve meaningfully. The high mean score recorded for equal opportunities (4.02) confirms that perceptions of fairness serve as the critical mechanism through which cultural and gender heterogeneity translates into productivity gains. The

intersectional nature of workplace identity explains why the combination of these two dimensions produces stronger effects than either dimension in isolation.

Second, age diversity significantly enhances employee performance, with a correlation coefficient of 0.495 and a beta coefficient of 0.286. The primary mechanism driving this relationship is bidirectional knowledge transfer. Younger employees acquire experiential wisdom from older colleagues, while older employees gain digital fluency and contemporary market insights from younger team members. This mutual learning process, reflected in the high mean scores of 4.08 and 4.01 respectively, positions age diversity as a resource for organizational learning rather than a source of intergenerational friction. However, this positive effect depends entirely on the presence of structured knowledge-sharing mechanisms within the organization.

Third, the two diversity dimensions collectively explain 34.5% of the variance in employee performance, indicating that while diversity matters substantially, other factors such as leadership style, organizational culture, and individual employee characteristics account for the remaining 65.5%. This study therefore concludes that workforce diversity is a necessary but not sufficient condition for enhanced performance; its benefits materialize only when supported by inclusive practices, equitable policies, and structured interventions.

Recommendations

Based on the discussion of findings, the following recommendations are proffered:

i. Integration of cultural and gender diversity initiatives into a unified strategy. The finding that cultural and gender diversity jointly produce a stronger effect (β = 0.384) than either dimension separately suggests that treating them as separate initiatives diminishes their potential. Nestlé Nigeria Plc should therefore abandon siloed diversity programmes and instead implement an integrated framework that simultaneously addresses cultural representation and gender balance. Specifically, the human resource department should ensure that diversity targets are defined intersectionally: recruitment panels must include both gender and ethnic diversity; promotion criteria should explicitly recognize the unique challenges faced by employees who belong to multiple underrepresented categories (e.g., women from minority ethnic groups); and diversity training modules should explicitly address how cultural and gender identities interact to shape workplace experiences. Without this integration, the organization risks achieving numerical representation without the accompanying performance gains that intersectional diversity can generate.

ii. Institutionalization of structured bidirectional mentoring programmes to maximize age diversity benefits. The finding that age diversity enhances performance through bidirectional knowledge transfer (mean scores of 4.08 and 4.01) carries a clear implication: passive coexistence of generations does not automatically produce learning. Nestlé Nigeria Plc must therefore institutionalize structured mentoring programmes that formalize knowledge exchange in both directions. Traditional mentoring, where experienced employees guide younger colleagues on organizational processes, industry norms, and career navigation, should be complemented with reverse mentoring, where younger employees train older colleagues on digital tools, social media analytics, and emerging market trends. These programmes should be time-bound, goal-oriented, and evaluated regularly for

effectiveness. Departments with the highest age diversity scores, such as Marketing and Sales (mean = 3.95), should serve as models for other units. Without such structured interventions, age diversity risks degenerating into the stereotyping and communication gaps documented in previous studies (Okoro & Ajayi, 2023). Nestlé must therefore treat intergenerational learning not as an incidental byproduct of age mixing but as a deliberate management priority.

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