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INFLUENCE OF WORKPLACE DIVERSITY ON EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE: A STUDY OF NIGERIA BOTTLING COMPANY PLC

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ABSTRACT
The study examined the influence of workplace diversity on employee performance in Nigeria Bottling Company. The study applied the diversity theory as a theoretical framework to explore workplace diversity. A descriptive research design was employed while a survey was adopted as the research strategy because it allows the collection of a large amount of data from a sizable population in an economical manner. The hypotheses tested suggest that cultural diversity indeed wields a significant influence on employee performance within Nigeria Bottling Company. These results refute the hypothesis' claim of no significant influence, highlighting that demographic, cognitive and cultural diversities all have a direct pivotal role in shaping employee performance outcomes. The study concluded that the presence of demographic diversity, including factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, and educational background, has a significant effect on employee performance in Nigeria Bottling Company Plc. Based on the conclusion, the following were recommend that diversity training sessions to educate employees and leadership about the benefits of demographic, cognitive, and cultural diversity be promoted and foster a culture of inclusive leadership where managers are trained to lead diverse teams effectively, leveraging various perspectives to drive innovation and collaboration. Lastly the management should establish a feedback culture that provides constructive feedback and recognizes employees' diverse contributions. This can boost motivation and performance.
KEYWORDS: *Cultural Diversity, Employees Performance, Job Commitment, Workplace Diversity*

INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized and competitive business environment, workplace diversity has emerged as a critical factor that is influencing organisational success. Diversity in the workplace encompasses differences in race, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability status, sexual orientation, education, and cultural background. As organisations become more inclusive, they are increasingly recognizing the position of diversity in driving employee performance and overall organisation productivity. (Shatrughan & Usha, 2020).

The relationship between workplace diversity and employee performance is complex and multifaceted. On one hand, diverse teams can bring a wide range of perspectives, foster innovation, and improve decision-making. On the other hand, if not managed effectively, diversity can lead to communication barriers, conflict, and reduced cohesion. Understanding how diversity influences performance is essential for managers and HR professionals seeking to leverage the benefits of an inclusive workforce while minimizing potential challenges (Mishlin & Krisztina, 2022).
Workplace diversity refers to the presence of individuals with different characteristics, backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences within an organization. These characteristics can include but are not limited to age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, and cultural or educational background. The concept of diversity encompasses a wide range of dimensions, each contributing to the richness and variety of the workforce (Darren, 2022; Patricia, Mouboua & Olateju, 2024).

As the demand for performance keep increasing in the modern workplaces, diversity has become the cornerstone of organisational survival and competitiveness. Diversity in the workplace extends beyond visible differences and includes a range of dimensions such as cultural background, demographic characteristics, and cognitive styles. These diverse attributes influence how employees think, interact, solve problems, and ultimately perform (Dyson, 2017).

One important dimension of diversity is demographic diversity, which is referred to as differences among individuals based on characteristics such as age, gender, race, and ethnicity (Darren, 2022; Patricia, Mouboua & Olateju, 2024). Research has indicated that demographic diversity can positively and negatively affect employee performance. On the positive side, diverse teams have been found to have higher levels of creativity, problem-solving ability, and information processing (Herring, 2009). Diverse perspectives can challenge group thinking and foster more robust decision-making processes. Moreover, organizations that prioritize diversity and inclusion often attract a broader range of talent, leading to increased employee engagement and retention (Hunt *Nigeria Bottling Company*, 2015).

Another critical dimension of diversity is cultural diversity. Cultural diversity refers to the variety of cultural or ethnic groups within a workplace. It influences communication styles, values, and work practices, often enriching team interactions but also presenting potential challenges in collaboration (Jason, 2020). Organizations that embrace cultural diversity often experience increased adaptability, improved market responsiveness, and enhanced creativity (Baluku, 2024). Cultural diversity can provide organizations with a competitive edge by facilitating a deeper understanding of diverse markets, customers, and global business environments. Moreover, employees from different cultural backgrounds can bring unique perspectives and insights, leading to innovative approaches to problem-solving and decision-making.

Understanding how these dimensions of diversity interact with employee performance is crucial for leaders seeking to build inclusive, high-performing organizations. While diversity can enhance creativity, decision-making, and market insight, it can also lead to misunderstandings or conflict if not well-managed. This study explores the impact of cultural, demographic, and cognitive diversity on employee performance, emphasizing both the opportunities and the challenges diversity brings to modern organizations (Bedi, lakra & Gupta, 2014). The study therefore seeks to examine the influence of workplace diversity on employee performance in Nigeria Bottling Company.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Despite growing awareness of the benefits of diversity in the workplace, many organizations continue to struggle with effectively managing and leveraging diverse teams to enhance employee performance. Cultural, demographic, and cognitive diversity offer the potential for increased innovation, broader perspectives, and improved problem-solving (Baluku, 2024).

Organizations across the globe have become increasingly diverse due to globalization, expansion of multinational corporations, migration, and inclusive employment policies. Workplace diversity encompassing differences in gender, age, ethnicity, educational background, culture, and religion has become a defining feature of modern organizations (Baluku, 2024). As a multinational organization, Nigeria Bottling Company PLC operates a diverse workforce and relies heavily on employee performance to maintain productivity, innovation, and competitive advantage.

While existing research such as Darren, (2022); Patricia, Mouboua and Olateju, (2024) pointed the potential benefits of workplace diversity, such as creativity, broader perspectives, and improved problem-solving, managing diversity effectively remains a significant challenge for many organizations. Poorly managed diversity can result in communication barriers, interpersonal conflicts, discrimination, reduced teamwork, and employee dissatisfaction. These challenges may negatively affect employee performance, productivity, and overall organizational effectiveness. In many large organizations, including manufacturing and beverage companies, employees from different cultural and demographic backgrounds often work together under demanding production targets. Without effective diversity management practices, differences in values, beliefs, and work styles may hinder collaboration and reduce individual and group performance. Although Nigeria Bottling Company PLC promotes diversity and inclusion as part of its corporate values, there are concerns about whether workplace diversity positively or negatively influences employee performance within its operational context.

Empirical studies on workplace diversity have produced mixed findings. While some studies suggest that diversity enhances employee performance, others indicate that it may lead to conflict and reduced efficiency if not properly managed. Furthermore, there is limited empirical evidence focusing specifically on the Nigerian context and on multinational beverage companies such as Nigeria Bottling Company PLC. This gap in context-specific research makes it difficult for management to design effective diversity management strategies that enhance employee performance.

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Therefore, investigating the dimensions of diversity present within the organization, such as demographic, cognitive, and cultural diversity, and assessing their impact on employee performance is essential for leveraging the potential benefits and addressing any challenges associated with diversity at Nigeria Bottling Company.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to examine the influence of workplace diversity on employee performance in Nigeria Bottling Company Plc while the specific objectives are to:

i. Determine the effect demographic diversity on employee performance in Nigeria Bottling Company Plc.
ii. Investigate the relationship between cognitive diversity and employee performance in Nigeria Bottling Company.
iii. Examine the influence of Cultural diversity within Nigeria Bottling Company on employee performance.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

i. Does demographic diversity affect employee performance in Nigeria Bottling Company Plc.?
ii. What is the relationship between cognitive diversity and employee performance in Nigeria Bottling Company?
iii. Does Cultural diversity within Nigeria Bottling Company have influence on employee performance.

Research Hypothesis

Hoi. Demographic diversity does not have significant effect on employee performance in Nigeria Bottling Company Plc.
Hoii. There is no significant relationship between cognitive diversity and employee performance in Nigeria Bottling Company.
Hoiii. Cultural diversity within Nigeria Bottling Company has no significant influence on employee performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The section here is to review relevant literatures on diversity management and employee performance across the regions. The literatures are considered based on relevance and detailed presentation of useful contents that would highly contribute to the composition of this study variables.

Conceptual Review

Diversity is seen in a restrictive and narrow-minded manner, concentrating mainly on topics of ethnicity and gender distinctions and connecting itself with the commandments which have earned some work teams and groups a certain reputation (Gupta & Aggarwal, 2021). According to Gomez and Bernet (2019) and Pleasant (2017) diversities are the foundation of diversity i.e individual differences and varied perspectives, when embraced, create a richer tapestry of diversity. Diversity is the real or perceived differences between individuals. Anglim *Nigeria Bottling Company* (2019) opined that human beings no matter the diversity is all naturally equipped with different talents and aptitudes (Ngalo *Nigeria Bottling Company* 2023). For the purpose of this review, the concept is categorized into three key dimensions: cultural diversity, demographic diversity, and cognitive diversity, each of which uniquely influences employee performance.

Cultural Diversity Cultural diversity refers to the variety of cultural or ethnic groups represented within an organization. It includes differences in language, values, customs, traditions, and worldviews. Cultural diversity can enhance creativity and global awareness, as employees bring varied perspectives and problem-solving approaches. However, it may also pose challenges such as communication barriers, cultural misunderstandings, and differences in work styles. Effective cross-cultural communication and inclusive leadership are essential to harness the positive effects of cultural diversity on performance (Gomez & Bernet 2019).

Demographic Diversity: Demographic diversity involves variations in age, gender, race, ethnicity, disability status, and socio-economic background. These characteristics shape individuals' experiences and expectations in the workplace. For example, generational diversity can lead to differences in technology usage, work ethic, and communication preferences. Gender and racial diversity have been linked to improved team dynamics and innovation, but only in environments where equity and inclusion are actively promoted. Organizations that acknowledge and value demographic diversity tend to experience higher levels of employee satisfaction and productivity (Gomez & Bernet 2019).

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Cognitive Diversity: Cognitive diversity is defined as differences in thought processes, problem-solving styles, and decision-making approaches. It is not always visible and is often independent of cultural or demographic backgrounds. Cognitive diversity enhances a team's capacity to address complex problems, adapt to change, and develop innovative solutions. However, it may also lead to disagreements and slower consensus if team members struggle to understand or integrate different viewpoints. When well-managed, cognitive diversity becomes a powerful driver of performance and learning (Gomez & Bernet 2019).

Employees' Performance

Employee performance is commonly evaluated through metrics such as productivity, efficiency, collaboration, innovation, and goal attainment. The impact of diversity on performance is neither universally positive nor negative, depending on the organizational culture, leadership practices, and the presence of inclusive systems. When diversity is embraced and effectively managed, it can lead to improved employee morale, better decision-making, and stronger organizational outcomes. Conversely, unmanaged diversity may lead to division, conflict, and reduced engagement (Gupta & Aggarwal, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

Diversity Theory

According to Washington (2008), diversity can be seen as "representing a multitude of individual differences and similarities that exist among people". Diversity includes a wide range of human characteristics, for example, from one's personality to sexual orientation to educational background to work location. These diversity characteristics are illustrated in the Four Layers of Diversity Model by Gardenswartz and Rowe (Washington, 2008).

This model had an impact that influenced and encouraged people to talk about diversity. It lays the foundation for inclusion by examining each individual's existence in an organization (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2016). This model is illustrated in Figure 1.



Figure 1: The Four Layers of Diversity Model, Gardenswartz and Rowe (1994)
Adapted from: (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2016)

Empirical Review

When dealing with diversity in the workplace, employees need to know that management is committed when implementing any new strategy (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). Organizations usually have many diversity barriers that are very general and indirect, therefore when dealing with workplace diversity for the improvement of an organization, it is important to have reliable leadership. Organizational success requires management to take charge of diversity strategies and stand accountable for any issues that may arise; they should ensure that these issues are reported, and

discussed, and the appropriate action should be taken (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). This will ensure that diversity barriers are addressed and a workforce will be built that truly reflects the demographics of the accessible labor market, as well as build employee commitment (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). Therefore, enforcing the commitment and accountability of management is critical; these diversity strategies will mean transforming an organization for the better (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004).

Organizations need to conduct a detailed needs assessment. To be successful, workplace diversity needs to be personalized to a specific organization as well as the unique employees who face challenges (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). A need assessment focuses on the employees, the jobs, and the organization; this is to ensure that diversity issues are outlined correctly and appropriate actions are taken. Therefore, the need assessment benefits an organization by discovering the broad variety of options and choosing the best strategies to address the diversity issues in an organization (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004).

At an employee level, an effective need assessment involves comprehending the organization's challenges, evaluating the demographics of an organization, as well as being aware of the attitudes of employees (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). An organization can do some research by using focus groups, surveys, or interviews to discover the issues that employees face in an organization (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). The research that an organization does can explore the attitudes of employees, as well as detect issues in an organization that management may overlook. For example, an organization can analyze complaints that have been made by employees, or evaluate any activity that has taken place regarding legal policies and practices. A detailed need assessment benefits an organization by identifying areas that need attention (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004).

At an organizational level, the culture of an organization is important when developing new diversity strategies. An organization's culture needs to be taken into consideration because a strategy that may be implemented successfully in one organization may not be successful in another (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). Therefore, management needs to focus on the organization and pay attention to the needs and support that are needed for a specific organization. If an organization does not consider its culture, the result will be more likely than that new diversity strategies which will be underutilized due to employees' non-participation (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004).

Organizations need to link diversity strategies with the results they want to achieve to be successful. The diversity strategy that is developed will guide decision-making in an organization, as well as organizational processes (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). For an organization to be transformed, organizations first need to recognize the competitive advantages of workplace diversity, such as recruiting the best talent, appreciating a diverse customer base, improving teamwork results, and increasing productivity (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). Thus, organizations need to develop diversity strategies that link to the outcomes that an organization want to achieve, and in this way, challenges will be addressed successfully (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004).

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive research design was employed to analyze the influence of workplace diversity on employee performance in Nigeria Bottling Company Plc. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), descriptive survey design helps a researcher to gather, summarize, present, and interpret information for clarification. The researcher employed the survey strategy for the study. This strategy is proposed because it allows the collection of a large amount of data from a sizable population in an economical manner. Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2009), recommend this strategy because the method allows researchers to collect quantitative data which can be analyzed quantitatively using inferential statistics. The method is also perceived as authoritative by people in general and is both comparatively easy to explain and to understand.

Quantitative research was used to conduct this research study and hypotheses was generated. As a quantitative study, researchers need to distribute the questionnaire to respondents to conclude. In addition, the research covered a wider population thus quantitative method is more suitable rather than the qualitative method where a small sample is used and involves interviews.

The target population for this study includes all the four thousand eight hundred (4800) members of Nigeria Bottling Company bottling company, in Lagos Nigeria. The company was selected as the unit of study because of their large

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size of staff including the usage and the popularity of their product. Members of the staff of Nigeria Bottling Company was randomly selected from the members of staff of the organizations in Lagos state.
The sample size was determined, using Taro Yamane's formula given by:

$$n = \frac{N}{(1 + N(e)^2)}$$

Where:
n = sample size
N = population of the study (4800) 2.5025
e = error of tolerance (%)
1 = statistical constant
Therefore: $n = \frac{4800}{(1+4800(0.05)^2)}$
$n = 369.23076923076917$
The sample size for this study is three hundred and seventy (370)

Table 1: Sample Size

Population Category	Population Count	Sample Size
Total Nigeria Bottling Company Staff	4,800	
Selected Sample		370

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: The presence of demographic diversity, including factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, and educational background, has no significant effect on employee performance in Nigeria Bottling Company Plc.

Table 2: Analysis of data on demographic diversity's effect on employee performance in Nigeria Bottling Company.

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	39.266[a]	4	0.000
Likelihood Ratio	31.188	4	0.000
Fisher's Exact Test	26.608		0.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	22.136[b]	1	0.000
N of Valid Cases	330		

*Pearson Chi-squared = 39.266a, df = 4, Significance $p<0.05$.
*Fisher's Exact Test = 26.608, Significance $p<0.05$.
Hypothesis One posits that the presence of demographic diversity, encompassing variables such as age, gender, ethnicity, and educational background, does not exert a significant influence on employee performance at Nigeria Bottling Company.

Analyzing the data on the effect of demographic diversity on employee performance, as shown in Table 2, reveals a set of compelling statistical outcomes. The table presents values for several statistical tests along with their respective degrees of freedom and asymptotic significance levels (p-values). In detailed, the Pearson Chi-Square test, calculated at 39.266 with 4 degrees of freedom, indicates a remarkable significance level of 0.000 ($p<0.05$). Similarly, the Likelihood Ratio test yields a value of 31.188 based on 4 degrees of freedom, with an associated significance level of 0.000.
The Fisher's Exact Test also accentuates the significance of the relationship, yielding a value of 26.608 and a significance level of 0.000. Moreover, the Linear-by-Linear Association test emphasizes a significant linear relationship, indicating a value of 22.136 with 1 degree of freedom and a significance level of 0.000.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between cognitive diversity and employee performance in Nigeria Bottling Company.

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Table 3: Analysis of the relationship between cognitive diversity and employee performance

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	28.886[a]	4	0.004
Likelihood Ratio	22.670	4	0.031
Fisher's Exact Test	23.034		0.008
Linear-by-Linear Association	11.752[b]	1	0.001
N of Valid Cases	**330**		

*Pearson Chi-squared = 28.886[a], df = 4, Significance p<0.05.
*Fisher's Exact Test = 23.034, Significance p<0.05.

Hypothesis Two posits that there is no significant relationship between cognitive diversity and employee performance within Nigeria Bottling Company.

Table 3 provides values for various statistical tests, along with their corresponding degrees of freedom and asymptotic significance levels (p-values). In specific terms, the Pearson Chi-Square test yields a calculated value of 28.886 with 4 degrees of freedom, resulting in a noteworthy significance level of 0.004 (p<0.05). Similarly, the Likelihood Ratio test produces a value of 22.670 based on 4 degrees of freedom, accompanied by a significance level of 0.031.

The Fisher's Exact Test contributes to the narrative, displaying a value of 23.034, with a significance level of 0.008. Moreover, the Linear-by-Linear Association test underscores a significant linear relationship, indicating a value of 11.752 with 1 degree of freedom and a significance level of 0.001.

In summary, the consistent presence of low p-values across these tests challenges the assertion put forth by Hypothesis Two. The analysis strongly suggests that there is indeed a significant relationship between cognitive diversity and employee performance within Nigeria Bottling Company. These results call into question the hypothesis' claim of no significant relationship, indicating that cognitive diversity does play a notable role in influencing employee performance outcomes.

Hypothesis Three: Cultural diversity within Nigeria Bottling Company has no significant influence on employee performance.

Table 4: Analysis of cultural diversity influence on employee performance.

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	82.253[a]	4	0.000
Likelihood Ratio	26.027	4	0.011
Fisher's Exact Test	24.940		0.006
Linear-by-Linear Association	17.848[b]	1	0.000
N of Valid Cases	**330**		

*Pearson Chi-squared = 82.253[a], df = 4, Significance p<0.05.
*Fisher's Exact Test = 24.940, Significance p<0.05.
Hypothesis Three proposes that cultural diversity within Nigeria Bottling Company does not exert a significant influence on employee performance.

Upon examining the analysis presented in Table 4, which explores the influence of cultural diversity on employee performance, several significant statistical findings come to light. The table provides values for various statistical tests, along with their corresponding degrees of freedom and asymptotic significance levels (p-values).
In specific terms, the Pearson Chi-Square test yields a calculated value of 82.253 with 4 degrees of freedom, resulting in a highly significant significance level of 0.000 (p<0.05). Similarly, the Likelihood Ratio test produces a value of 26.027 based on 4 degrees of freedom, accompanied by a significance level of 0.011.

The Fisher's Exact Test adds weight to the evidence, displaying a value of 24.940, with a significance level of 0.006. Moreover, the Linear-by-Linear Association test highlights a significant linear relationship, indicating a value of 17.848 with 1 degree of freedom and a significance level of 0.000.

In summary, the consistent presence of low p-values across these tests strongly challenges the assertion put forth by Hypothesis Three. The analysis robustly suggests that cultural diversity indeed wields a significant influence on employee performance within Nigeria Bottling Company. These results refute the hypothesis' claim of no significant influence, highlighting that cultural diversity does play a pivotal role in shaping employee performance outcomes.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Hypothesis one shows that the presence of demographic diversity, including factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, and educational background, has a significant effect on employee performance in Nigeria Bottling Company Plc. However, Backes-Gellner & Veen, (2009) conducted a study on 18,000 firms and two million employees and found that age diversity does not cause a decrease in firm productivity. Moreover, it positively impacts companies in terms of creativity and innovation which contributes to companies' performance. Kunze, Boehm, & Bruch, (2011) utilizing the data of 128 German firms, proved that age diversity led to the negative performance of the experimented firms. In addition, Abdullah & Ku Ismail, (2013) used 100 non-financial Malaysian businesses and provided evidence that age diversity harms a company's performance. Ali, Kulik, & Metz, (2009) used information from 422 firms that were listed on the Australian Securities Exchange between the years 2002 and 2005. According to the findings of the regression study, gender diversity, and company performance were found to be positively correlated.

Hypothesis two shows that there is a significant relationship between cognitive diversity and employee performance in Nigeria Bottling Company Plc. Parayitam and Papenhausen (2016) studied cognitive diversity as part of three group processes in teams' functioning (agreement-seeking behaviour, trust, and cognitive diversity) which were hypothesized to be positively related to strategic decision-making commitment and team effectiveness. The research findings confirmed the hypothesis and it was found that process conflict moderated the relationship. The process of cognitive diversity is seen as a required process for strategic decision-making because the differences in educational, functional and cultural backgrounds of the team improve depth and breadth of knowledge to make better decisions.
Hypothesis three shows that cultural diversity within Nigeria Bottling Company has significant influence on employee performance. Ayega *Nigeria Bottling Company* (2018), conducted exploration study to know if there is any relationship between cultural diversity and employee performance in an organization. They studied factors like gender, culture, age, nationality and race. The outcomes demonstrated that there is a major connection between social assorted and execution organization. In all reviews they recommend that organizations should have a proper management of their cultural diversity.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that there is a significant relationship between demographic diversity, cognitive diversity and employee performance in Nigeria Bottling Company Plc. It was also concluded that cultural diversity within Nigeria Bottling Company Plc has a significant influence on employee performance.

Based on the comprehensive analysis of workplace diversity's influence on employee performance within Nigeria Bottling Company, several recommendations can be proposed to enhance organizational practices and capitalize on the positive impact of diversity:

- **i.** The management of Nigeria Bottling Company Plc should adopt inclusive human resource policies that promote fairness and equal opportunity across all demographic groups.
- **ii.** The organization should also implement flexible work arrangements and mentorship programs that encourage collaboration between employees of different age groups and experience levels.
- **iii.** Nigeria Bottling Company Plc should intentionally create diverse work teams that combine employees with varying expertise, educational backgrounds, and problem-solving abilities.
- **iv.** Management should encourage open communication and idea-sharing by creating a psychologically safe work environment where employees feel free to express different viewpoints without fear of criticism or marginalization.
- **v.** Nigeria Bottling Company Plc should strengthen its diversity and inclusion policies to accommodate employees from different cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds.
- **vi.** Management should promote cultural sensitivity through regular intercultural training programs that educate employees on respect, tolerance, and effective cross-cultural communication.

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