



Diversity, Inclusion and Employee Productivity in Transport Companies in Nigeria

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1. Introduction

In today's globalized and diverse work environment, organizations recognize the importance of diversity and inclusion in enhancing employee productivity. Diversity refers to the presence of different groups or individuals with unique characteristics, experiences, and perspectives within an organization, while inclusion refers to the creation of an environment where all individuals feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute (Rohwerder, 2017). Research has shown that organizations that promote diversity and inclusion experience higher employee engagement, job satisfaction, and productivity.

Studies have consistently demonstrated the positive impact of diversity and inclusion on employee productivity. For instance, a study by Goswami and Goswami (2018) found that workforce diversity and managerial support significantly influenced workplace inclusion, which in turn affected employee engagement. Similarly, Makudza, Muchongwe and Dangoiso (2020) found that workforce diversity was a significant predictor of employee productivity. However, other studies have highlighted the challenges and limitations of implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives, including the potential for negative outcomes.

Given the importance of diversity and inclusion in enhancing employee productivity, this study aims to investigate the relationship between diversity, inclusion, and employee productivity in a specific organizational context. The study will examine the impact of demographics, inclusion strategies, pay equity, and challenges of diversity and inclusion on employee productivity. By exploring these issues, this study seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on diversity, inclusion, and employee productivity, and provide insights for organizations seeking to improve their diversity and inclusion practices.

Organizations today face the challenge of managing a diverse workforce and creating an inclusive culture that fosters employee productivity. Despite the growing recognition of the importance of diversity and inclusion, many organizations struggle to implement effective diversity and inclusion initiatives that positively impact

employee productivity. According to a study by McKinsey (2021), diverse companies are more likely to outperform their less diverse peers, highlighting the importance of diversity and inclusion in driving business outcomes.

Managing diversity is a complex issue that requires organizations to create an inclusive culture that values and respects differences (Goswami & Goswami, 2018). Research has shown that employees who feel included and valued are more likely to be productive and engaged, highlighting the importance of creating an inclusive work environment (Nwosu, Amoke, Kinikanwo & Ikeotuonye, 2025). However, many organizations struggle to create an inclusive culture, with research suggesting that unconscious bias and micro aggressions can negatively impact employee productivity (Krieger, 2019). Inclusion strategies are critical in creating an inclusive culture that fosters employee productivity (Okatta, Ajayi, & Olawale, 2024). Research has shown that organizations that implement effective inclusion strategies, such as diversity training and mentorship programs, are more likely to experience positive business outcomes (Hunt, Layton & Prince, 2018). However, more research is needed to understand the impact of inclusion strategies on employee productivity, particularly in diverse work environments like Nigeria. Therefore, this study is focused on determining the relationship and impact of inclusion strategies and pay equity on employee productivity and the associated challenges faced by organizations in Nigeria in implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Employee Productivity

Productivity is consistently accomplishing essential tasks while balancing all production elements to achieve the highest output with minimal effort. It involves adopting a mind-set that prioritizes progress and continually enhances existing processes (Locke & Latham, 2019). Employee productivity, or workforce productivity, is the quantifiable measure of an

employee's output or efficiency in completing their assigned tasks or responsibilities within a specific period. This can be measured in terms of the work's quantity, quality or timeliness.

Employee productivity measures how efficiently and effectively a worker or a group of workers contribute to accomplishing organizational goals (Huselid, 2018). It is a key performance indicator (KPI) that measures the output of work in relation to the inputs of time, effort and resources. Improving employee productivity is a critical component of organizational success (Manyika, Woetzel, Bission, Chui, Wong & Damales, 2017).

2.1.2 Consequences / Implications of Employee Productivity

Employee productivity has significant implications for organizational performance and overall business success. High productivity enhances profitability, operational efficiency, and competitiveness, as employees contribute more effectively toward achieving corporate goals (Deloitte, 2022). Productive employees enable organizations to deliver higher-quality outputs at lower costs, which strengthens their market position and customer satisfaction levels. Conversely, low productivity can lead to missed deadlines, reduced output quality, and increased operational costs, ultimately undermining an organization's growth potential (McKinsey & Company, 2021).

Another major consequence of employee productivity is its direct impact on organizational culture and morale. When employees are highly productive, it fosters a positive work environment characterized by motivation, teamwork, and engagement (Gallup report, 2023). Productivity improvements often stem from supportive leadership, effective communication, and recognition, all of which enhance job satisfaction. However, consistently low productivity may reflect disengagement or burnout, leading to dissatisfaction and high turnover rates (SHRM, 2022). Thus, maintaining balanced workloads and fair reward systems is essential for sustaining morale and long-term productivity.

Employee productivity also influences innovation and adaptability within organizations. Productive employees often demonstrate higher creativity and problem-solving capabilities, enabling firms to respond swiftly to market changes and technological advancements (World Economic Forum, 2023). Organizations that cultivate productivity through skills development and inclusive workplace practices benefit from greater innovation and resilience in dynamic environments. In contrast, low productivity may limit innovation capacity, making it harder for firms to adapt to competitive pressures or economic fluctuations (PWC, 2021).

2.2. Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity refers to the presence of differences among individuals within an organization, encompassing characteristics such as race, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, education, and cultural background (Roberson, 2019). It reflects the variety of unique experiences, perspectives, and identities that people bring to the workplace. Diversity is not only about representation but also about recognizing and valuing these differences as a source of innovation and organizational strength (Shore, Cleveland & Sanchez, 2018). Inclusion, on the other hand, is the practice of creating an environment in which all individuals feel respected, accepted, and valued for who they are (Deloitte, 2020). It involves actively engaging diverse individuals in decision-making processes, ensuring equal opportunities, and fostering a sense of belonging where everyone can contribute their full potential. Inclusion transforms diversity from mere representation into meaningful participation, enhancing collaboration and employee well-being (Ferdman & Deane, 2020).

Both aspects of diversity and inclusion (D&I) are essential in building a healthy and effective workplace culture. Diversity without inclusion can result in a toxic environment where employees feel isolated, while inclusion without diversity may lead to groupthink and a lack of innovation. Although many companies are beginning to prioritize diversity, they often overlook the inclusion component. However, without a strategic commitment to both, employees, especially those from underrepresented groups—may feel unsupported or alienated within the organization (Harvard Business Review, 2017).

Diversity in the workplace refers to the presence of different groups or individuals with unique characteristics, experiences, and perspectives (Rohwerder, 2017). Research has shown that diverse workforces can lead to increased creativity, innovation, and problem-solving (Goswami & Goswami, 2018). A study by Makudza et al. (2020) found that workforce diversity was a significant predictor of employee productivity. Inclusion strategies are critical in creating an inclusive culture that fosters employee productivity. Organizations that implement effective inclusion strategies, such as diversity training and mentorship programs, are more likely to experience positive business outcomes. Research has shown that employees who feel included and valued are more likely to be productive and engaged (Nwosu et al., 2025).

Implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives can be challenging, particularly in organizations with entrenched cultures and biases (Rohwerder, 2017). Research has shown that unconscious bias and micro aggressions can negatively impact employee productivity (Krieger, 2019). Organizations must prioritize creating an inclusive culture that values and

respects differences. The social exchange theory provides a framework for understanding the relationship between diversity, inclusion, and employee productivity. According to this theory, employees who feel valued and respected are more likely to engage in productive behaviours. Diversity and inclusion are an organization's effort, policies, and practices that ensure different groups or individuals of different backgrounds are culturally and socially accepted and integrated into the workplace. An organization that focuses on diversity and inclusion will employ a diverse team of people that reflects the society in which it operates.

2.2.1 Measures of Diversity and Inclusion

2.2.1.1 Inclusion Strategies

An effective inclusion strategy involves creating organizational policies, practices, and cultures that actively embrace diversity and ensure equitable participation and opportunity for all employees. This includes fostering psychological safety, addressing unconscious bias, implementing equitable recruitment and promotion processes, and providing diversity and inclusion training. Recent studies emphasize that organizations with strong inclusion strategies not only improve employee engagement and innovation but also achieve higher financial performance and retention rates, as employees are more likely to feel valued and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives (Bourke & Espedido, 2020; Deloitte, 2023). Inclusive environments can lead to increased innovation, improved employee morale, and a stronger sense of belonging, which can contribute to overall organizational success. Some effective inclusion strategies include listening to employees, using inclusive language, holding leaders accountable, practice inclusive leadership and measuring progress.

2.2.1.2 Pay Equity

Pay equity refers to the principle of compensating employees fairly and equally for work of equal value, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, or other personal characteristics (Heldman, 2025). It ensures that employees performing similar roles with comparable skills, effort, and responsibility receive equitable compensation. Pay equity goes beyond simple wage comparison, it addresses systemic inequalities that influence salary decisions, such as unconscious bias or discriminatory practices in recruitment, promotion, and evaluation processes (World Economic Forum, 2023).

In the modern workplace, pay equity is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of diversity, inclusion, and organizational fairness. Studies show that equitable pay enhances employee engagement, trust, and retention while reducing turnover and workplace conflict (Tucker, 2024). Moreover, organizations that prioritize pay equity are more likely to attract diverse talent and comply with global labour standards and legal

frameworks promoting fair compensation (OECD, 2022). Ultimately, pay equity fosters a culture of transparency and equality, strengthening both organizational performance and social responsibility.

2.3. Challenges of Workplace Diversity and Inclusion

Challenges of workplace diversity and inclusion often arise because organizations bring together people with different backgrounds, experiences, values, and communication styles. Workplace diversity and inclusion (D&I) face several challenges despite growing awareness and organizational efforts to promote equity. One major challenge is unconscious bias, which affects hiring, promotion, and team dynamics. Even when organizations adopt inclusive policies, implicit stereotypes and prejudices often influence decision-making processes, leading to unequal opportunities for minority employees (Roberson, 2019). Such biases can undermine efforts to create a fair and inclusive environment, especially when leaders are unaware of their own prejudgments. Another significant challenge is communication and cultural barriers among employees from diverse backgrounds. Differences in language, cultural norms, and communication styles can lead to misunderstandings and conflict, ultimately affecting teamwork and productivity (Onyebueke, 2024). When employees do not feel understood or respected, it reduces engagement and collaboration, thereby weakening inclusion efforts. Organizations often underestimate the importance of cultural intelligence training to address these issues effectively.

Furthermore, resistance to change remains a major obstacle to diversity and inclusion. Some employees or managers perceive D&I initiatives as threats to established norms or favouritism towards certain groups, creating tension within the workplace (Lima, Rahman, Bhuiyan, & Rahman, 2025). This resistance can manifest in passive non-compliance or active opposition, which hinders the success of inclusion programs. Without strong leadership commitment and continuous education, these negative perceptions persist and weaken organizational culture. Lastly, lack of accountability and measurement limits progress in D&I implementation. Many organizations fail to track diversity metrics or evaluate the real impact of their initiatives, resulting in superficial compliance rather than meaningful change (Bourke & Espedido, 2020). Sustainable inclusion requires setting clear goals, monitoring progress, and holding leaders responsible for outcomes. Without data-driven accountability, diversity efforts risk becoming symbolic rather than transformative.

2.4. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework was developed from the integration of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) Theory and Social Exchange Theory (SET). It illustrates how

diversity and inclusion affect employee productivity. Developed by Ang and Dyne (2008), cultural Intelligence refers to the ability to effectively understand, adapt to, and work across different cultural contexts, a skill that is central to authentic inclusion. As organizations become more diverse, the presence of CQ enables individuals and teams to bridge cultural gaps, reduce misunderstandings, and foster trust, making inclusion a natural, everyday reality rather than a checkbox. This inclusive atmosphere promotes collaboration and cohesion, which are essential for optimizing employee productivity. Research also demonstrates that leaders with higher CQ drive better team performance, especially in culturally diverse environments, its predictive validity surpassing that of emotional intelligence in such contexts. Further, employee development of CQ enhances perceived inclusion and belonging, which both directly feed into improved engagement and productivity. Transforming diversity into productive strength thus hinges on cultivating CQ throughout the organization.

Social exchange theory emphasizes that workplace relationships are shaped by a dynamic of reciprocity and a subjective cost–benefit analysis: employees weigh what they invest against what they receive in return. When organizations demonstrate inclusive behaviours, for instance, by recognizing diverse contributions and maintaining fairness, employees experience a positive return on their engagement, fostering higher loyalty, trust, and motivation. This, in turn, enhances their willingness to perform at their best and boosts overall productivity. Moreover, empirical studies have confirmed that inclusive leadership grounded in SET leads to elevated work engagement and innovative behaviours—critical aspects of productivity, particularly through strengthened leader-member exchanges and increased psychological safety. Thus, when employees perceive equitable exchanges and inclusive support, their engagement and performance rise a clear pathway from diversity-sensitive practices to improved productivity.

2.5. Empirical Review

Nwosu et al., (2025) investigates the relationship between diversity management, inclusion, and employee productivity among bank employees in Lagos Metropolis. Specifically, it examines four key areas: the effect of diversity team building, the impact of diversity recruitment, the role of diversity training, and the influence of workplace inclusivity on employee productivity. Using a survey questionnaire, the study collected data from 120 participants, with 115 complete responses returned. The data was analyzed using SPSS software, employing frequency and percentage distributions for descriptive statistics, and multiple regression analysis for hypothesis testing at a 0.05 significance level. The findings from the study revealed that organizations that promote diversity and inclusion experience higher employee engagement, job

satisfaction, and productivity. Employees in inclusive work environments, where diverse perspectives are valued, reported increased motivation and commitment to their roles.

Suparyanto, Fauzi, Nungraha, and Tarmizi (2025) explored the impact of diversity and inclusion in the workplace on employee performance and innovation in organizations. In the context of increasing globalization, companies are faced with the challenge of creating an inclusive work environment, where different cultural backgrounds, genders, and experiences can contribute to the maximum. This research methodology uses a quantitative approach with a survey involving 20 respondents from various industrial sectors. The data was analyzed using multiple regression techniques to identify the relationship between diversity, inclusion, employee performance, and level of innovation. The results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between team diversity and improved individual performance as well as collaboration between team members. In addition, an inclusive work environment was shown to encourage creativity and new product innovation.

Atmaja and Dewi (2024) explored diversity management to achieve employee engagement and determine the mediating role of organizational trust and motivation in the relationship between diversity management and employee engagement in e-commerce companies who provide fresh vegetables and fruits. The sampling method is purposive sampling by distributed questionnaires online to 135 respondents and analytical method used Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results of the research prove that there is a positive and significant influence of diversity management on employee engagement, diversity management has a positive and significant influence on organizational trust.

Makudza, Muchongwe, and Dangaiso (2020) examined the differential effect of workforce diversity on employee productivity and its subsequent impact on customer experience. A once-off cross-sectional research design was used in this study where the Zimbabwean civil service was targeted. Randomization was used to collect 324 validated responses. The study focused on both primary (age and gender) and secondary (education and political affiliation) dimensions of workforce diversity. The results were confirmatory that workforce diversity is a significant predictor of employee productivity ($\beta = 0.668$, $P < 0.05$), at the same time employee productivity holds explanation to customer experience by 37%. Results also revealed that gender diversity, educational diversity and political diversity were significant determinants of workforce diversity ($P < 0.05$). However, the study established that age diversity was not a significant factor in enhancing employee productivity ($P > 0.05$). The study concluded that workforce diversity is a powerful tool in enhancing both customer experience and

employee productivity. As such, the latter can be augmented through shrewd workforce diversity practices as championed by management. To that end, the study recommends the development of a workforce diversity framework which promotes inclusivity.

3. Methodology

This section covered a detailed account of how this research work was carried out, while revealing the research methods that are used in the research study. With focus on the diversity, inclusion, and employee productivity in Nigeria, land transport companies were understudied. To gather information and describe the phenomena as they are at the time, the survey research approach was adopted and this was justified by the fact that it is necessary to study the link that exists between two or more variables. The population comprises of employees from various departments of some selected transport companies in Nigeria. The employees include Logistics manager, Transport manager, Fleet manager, Dispatchers, Warehouse manager, Logistics analyst, Logistics coordinator, international logistics manager.

4. Empirical Analysis and Results

4.1. Relationship between Workplace Diversity and inclusion and Employee Productivity

Correlation Analysis

Bivariate Pearson correlation coefficients were conducted on the data for all the variables in the study. Table 1 shows the Pearson correlation coefficients among research variables.

Table 1: Pearson Correlation Coefficients among Research Variables

Variable		EP	IS	PE	WPD
Employee Productivity	Pearson Correlation	1	.521	.446	.344
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.001
	N	88	88	88	88
Inclusion Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.521	1	.606	.542
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	88	88	88	88
Workplace Diversity	Pearson Correlation	.344	.542	.572	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.000	
	N	88	88	88	88

Source: Researcher's computation (2026)

Table 1 presents the correlation matrix showing the relationships between Employee Productivity (EP) and the two independent variables Inclusion Strategies (IS) and Workplace Diversity (WPD). The results reveal several significant positive correlations. Employee Productivity (EP) has a moderate positive correlation with Inclusion Strategies (IS) ($r = 0.521, p < 0.001$), indicating that improvements in inclusion strategies are associated with higher levels of productivity among employees. Additionally, EP exhibits a weaker but significant positive correlation with Workplace Diversity (WPD) ($r = 0.344, p = 0.001$), implying that diversity has a meaningful, though smaller, contribution to employee productivity. The independent variables also demonstrate strong and significant positive associations among themselves. Inclusion Strategies (IS) is also strongly correlated with Workplace Diversity (WPD) ($r = 0.542, p < 0.001$), suggesting that inclusion initiatives tend to coexist with a diverse work environment.

Overall, the findings indicate that inclusion strategies and workplace diversity both significantly and positively influence employee productivity, with inclusion strategies showing the strongest relationship. The strong inter-correlations among the independent variables also suggest that these organizational practices tend to reinforce one another, collectively contributing to a more productive and supportive work environment.

4.2 Hypotheses Testing

The hypotheses were tested using the p-values (Sig.) presented in the regression results.

Table 2: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	3.137	3.292		.953	.343
Inclusion strategies	.390	.120	.390	3.241	.002
Pay Equity	.184	.114	.200	1.620	.000
Challenges of WPD	.016	.101	.018	.156	.876

Dependent Variable: Employee Productivity

The interpretations based on Table 2 are presented below.

Hypothesis 1

H₀₁: Inclusion strategies have no significant relationship with employee productivity.

Table 2 shows that the regression coefficient for Inclusion Strategies is 0.390, with a p-value of 0.002, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that inclusion strategies have a significant positive effect on employee productivity. In other words, improvements in inclusion practices are associated with higher levels of employee productivity. This finding supports the conclusions of Shore et al. (2018), who noted that inclusive workplace cultures foster higher engagement, greater job satisfaction, and improved performance outcomes. Similarly, Barak (2016) emphasized that inclusion enhances employees’ sense of belonging, which in turn strengthens their willingness to contribute positively to organizational goals.

Hypothesis 2

H₀₂: Pay equity has no significant relationship with employee productivity.

The regression coefficient for Pay Equity is 0.184, with a p-value reported as 0.000, which is below the 0.05 threshold, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that pay equity has a significant positive influence on employee productivity. This suggests that when employees perceive compensation as fair, their productivity increases. This aligns with Adams’ Equity Theory (1965), which posits that individuals compare their input–output ratios with those of others, and equitable treatment leads to positive work attitudes and improved performance. Empirical evidence from Heneman and Judge (2019) supports this finding, arguing that equitable pay structures reduce dissatisfaction, enhance morale, and promote higher levels of productivity.

Hypothesis 3

H₀₃: Challenges of workplace diversity have no significant relationship with employee productivity.

Table 2 reveals that the regression coefficient for Challenges of Workplace Diversity is 0.016, with a p-value of 0.876, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. This means that challenges associated with workplace diversity do not have a statistically significant effect on employee productivity. This suggests that diversity-related challenges do not meaningfully influence productivity levels among the respondents.

Table 3: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.547 ^a	.299	.274	2.81436	1.603

Predictors: (Constant), Challenges of Workplace, Diversity, Inclusion Strategies, Pay Equity

b. Dependent Variable: Employee Productivity

Table 3 presents the model summary of the regression analysis. The model demonstrates a moderate level of explanatory power, with an R value of 0.547, indicating a moderate positive correlation between the independent variables (workplace diversity, inclusion strategies, pay

equity, and challenges of the workplace) and the dependent variable (employee productivity).

The R-squared value of 0.299 shows that approximately 29.9% of the variation in employee productivity is explained by the predictors included in the model. The

adjusted R-squared value of 0.274, which adjusts for the number of predictors, confirms that the model retains a reasonable explanatory strength even after accounting for the number of variables. The standard error of the estimate, 2.81436, represents the average distance between the actual values and the predicted values of employee productivity, indicating the level of prediction accuracy within the model.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the impact of diversity and inclusion on employee productivity, with specific attention to the influence of demographic factors, inclusion strategies, pay equity, and the challenges associated with workplace diversity. The findings underscore the growing importance of inclusive practices in strengthening employee performance and improving organizational outcomes. The study revealed that inclusion strategies demonstrated a strong positive and significant influence on productivity, highlighting the role of supportive workplace environments where employees feel valued, respected, and included in decision-making processes. Furthermore, the study found that pay equity has a positive and significant impact on employee productivity, indicating that fair and transparent compensation systems encourage higher motivation, commitment, and work output. In addition, the study established that workplace diversity has a positive but moderately significant relationship with productivity, although certain challenges such as communication gaps, unconscious bias, and resistance to change limit its full potential when not adequately addressed.

Overall, the research concludes that diversity and inclusion are essential drivers of employee productivity, but their effectiveness depends on how well organizations implement supportive strategies and address existing barriers. Practices such as equitable compensation, inclusive leadership, effective communication, and continuous diversity training are crucial for maximizing the benefits of a diverse workforce. Organizations that embrace these principles are more likely to foster a productive, harmonious, and high-performing workplace capable of sustaining long-term success.

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