



Research Paper

Public Perception on Gender Diversity and Inclusion in Human Capital Development among Employees in Nigeria

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Abstract: This research investigates Nigerian employees' perceptions of gender diversity and inclusion in human capital development, a vital issue in a country where traditional gender roles and limited awareness impede workplace equity. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study surveyed 479 employees and interviewed 28 (5%) from public, private, NGO, and self-employed sectors to evaluate awareness, attitudes, and the effectiveness of workplace policies. Key findings reveal moderately positive attitudes toward gender diversity, with mean scores around 2.5 on a 4-point scale, though variability exists. However, practical implementation lags, with shortcomings in equal access to training, mentorship, and promotions. Workplace culture and policies are only moderately effective, particularly in elevating women to leadership roles, despite

some gender sensitivity efforts. Interestingly, demographic factors like gender, sector, age, and experience do not significantly shape perceptions, suggesting cultural norms predominantly influence attitudes. The study identifies a gap between awareness and action, emphasizing the need for systemic strategies over targeted fixes. Proposed solutions include intensified awareness campaigns, equitable development programs, refined policies, community collaboration, oversight mechanisms, leadership commitment, and employee engagement in diversity initiatives. This research contributes significantly to Nigeria's gender diversity discourse by highlighting the interplay of awareness, practice, and culture, offering a foundation for organizations and policymakers to build inclusive workplaces

and unlock the potential of a diverse workforce for national progress.

Keywords: Gender diversity, Gender inclusion, Human capital development, Public perception

Introduction:

Gender diversity refers to the fair representation of different gender identities, including men, women, and non-binary individuals, within the workforce. It is especially critical in sectors like science and engineering where men are traditionally dominant. Research consistently shows that gender-diverse teams demonstrate greater empathy, collaboration, and innovation (Alarcón-Alarcón et al., 2024; Eun-Jung, 2023; Yang et al., 2022). However, despite the benefits, Nigerian organizations continue to face challenges achieving gender parity, particularly in leadership roles. An inclusive work environment goes beyond representation; it supports safety, creativity, and equitable opportunities for all employees.

The link between gender diversity and human capital development is well-documented, with diverse teams showing improved decision-making and productivity. Studies by Herring (2009) and Eze & Okwu (2021) support the idea that inclusion boosts organizational performance. Yet, in Nigeria, entrenched cultural beliefs often lead to skepticism about such initiatives. This highlights the importance of awareness and training programs, policy enforcement, and mentorship to shift perceptions and promote equal opportunity. Human capital development — the process of building skills, knowledge, and health — benefits organizations by fostering innovation and global competitiveness.

Public perception of gender diversity varies across regions and demographics in Nigeria. Urban and educated populations, particularly younger professionals, are generally more supportive of inclusion. However, traditional norms and limited awareness continue to hinder progress in rural and male-dominated settings. Factors shaping perception include education, cultural values, media exposure, and organizational policies. Strong internal structures and corporate commitment to diversity play a crucial role in influencing employee attitudes and reducing bias (Hoang et al., 2022; Kadayi, 2023; Khajavi, 2024; Korovyakovskaya, 2024; Leuhery et al., 2024). Conversely, negative perceptions can result in exclusion, reduced engagement, and hindered career progression.

The benefits of promoting gender diversity are multifaceted. Ethically, it aligns with social responsibility and fosters fairness in the workplace. Diverse teams are more creative, adaptable, and productive, and inclusive organizations are better at attracting and retaining top talent. Moreover, such environments promote employee well-being, reduce discrimination, and enhance mental health (Khajavi, 2024; Korovyakovskaya, 2024; Leuhery et al., 2024). Embedding diversity into organizational culture ensures sustainability and positions companies to adapt to shifting societal expectations. Nationally, gender inclusion fuels economic growth, reduces poverty, and promotes social cohesion by allowing all citizens to contribute fully to development.

Despite these benefits, several barriers persist in Nigeria. Cultural traditions, early marriage, discriminatory laws, and economic disparities limit women's opportunities, particularly in STEM and

leadership. Women are underrepresented in decision-making roles and face wage gaps and occupational segregation. According to the National Gender Policy, women make up 47% of the labor force but hold only 20% of management roles and earn 29% less than men. To overcome these barriers, both organizations and the government must enforce gender-sensitive policies, support inclusive practices, and raise awareness. A strategic and sustained commitment to gender inclusion is key to national development and equity.

The exploration of gender diversity and inclusion in Nigerian workplaces is effectively grounded in four key theoretical frameworks, each offering a unique lens through which to understand human capital development. Social Identity Theory, developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1979, explains that individuals derive a strong sense of self from their social group affiliations (Khadka, 2024; Madson, 2024). In the Nigerian context, this theory helps explain how entrenched gender roles influence how employees perceive diversity efforts. When individuals identify strongly with traditional gender roles, they may unconsciously support in-group favoritism and resist policies they see as benefiting the out-group. Such group-based perceptions can directly impact collaboration and acceptance of inclusive workplace practices. Complementing this is Jay Barney's Resource-Based View (1991), which presents gender diversity as a strategic advantage within organizations (Barney et al., 2001; Barney, 1991). When companies leverage a workforce rich in varied perspectives, they increase their capacity for

innovation, adaptability, and long-term growth. In Nigeria, where inclusive human capital remains underutilized, the RBV emphasizes the value of treating gender diversity not as a token gesture but as a competitive asset that can transform performance outcomes.

Equity Theory, proposed by J. Stacy Adams in 1963, adds a psychological dimension to this analysis. It posits that individuals assess fairness in the workplace by comparing their input-output balance with that of others (Davlembayeva & Alamanos, 2023; Green, 2022). In environments where women perceive unequal access to promotions, training, or leadership roles, morale and productivity may suffer. Applying this theory in Nigeria helps surface employee dissatisfaction with existing disparities and provides insight into how equity-focused reforms could drive engagement. Finally, Institutional Theory, introduced by John Meyer and Brian Rowan in 1977, focuses on how organizations respond to societal expectations (Jepperson & Meyer, 2021). Nigerian firms, particularly those seeking international recognition or operating under global standards, often align their policies with broader social values, including gender equity. This alignment may stem more from a desire for legitimacy than internal conviction, but it still shapes workplace norms and influences employee perceptions. Together, these frameworks—covering identity, strategic resources, fairness, and social conformity—offer a comprehensive foundation for examining how gender diversity and inclusion practices affect human capital development within Nigeria's organizational landscape.

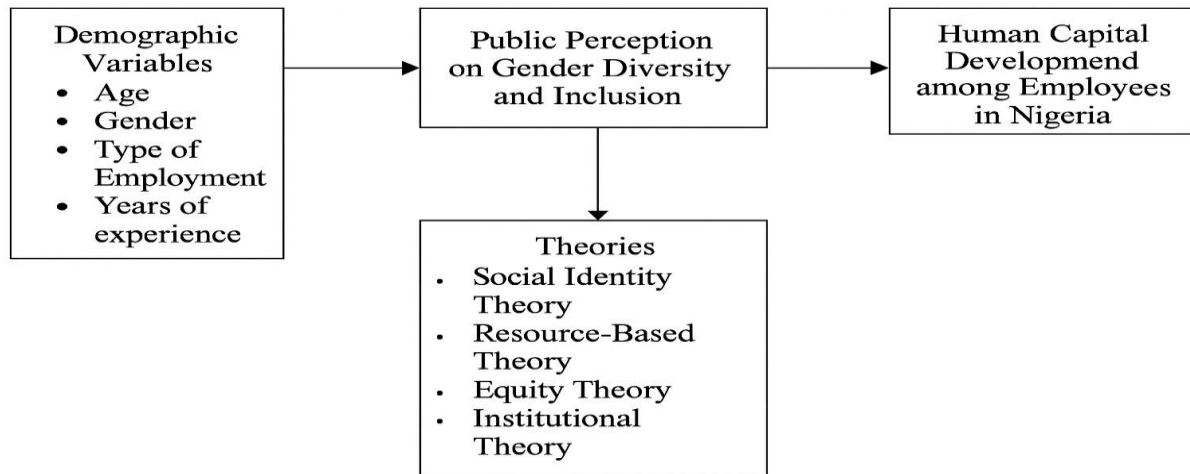


Fig 1: Conceptual framework of public perception on gender diversity and inclusion in human capital development among employees

Source: The Authors (2025).

The Figure 1 reveals that the public perception on gender diversity and inclusion in human capital development among employees can be influenced by some demographic variables like gender, age, types of employment, years of experience and that such perception is best explained and underpinned by basic theories like social identity, resource-based, equity and institutional theories.

Kaur and Arora (2020) pinpointed that diversity encompasses human differences in race, gender, age, values, and experiences, while inclusion fosters a respectful, participatory environment. This research highlights the growing importance of gender diversity in Indian and global organizations. It examines the gender gap in India's workforce, the benefits of inclusive practices—like innovation and performance—and the need for female-friendly policies as a strategic advantage for business success. Wadhwa and Aggarwal

(2023) examined barriers to workplace diversity—such as discrimination, prejudice, and ethnocentrism—and strategies to foster inclusion, including cultural learning, overseas assignments, and language training. It emphasized acknowledging biases, dispelling myths, and promoting group dialogue. Leadership commitment is crucial to creating inclusive cultures. Though progress exists, ongoing efforts and further research across industries and groups are vital for meaningful, sustainable change.

Chen and Song (2023) explored how gender diversity context, employee gender, and personal values influence attitudes and performance using optimal distinctiveness theory and social gender psychology. Analyzing employee-supervisor dyads, it finds that gender distance positively impacts inclusion for low-conservation males but negatively for low-conservation females. Inclusion perceptions mediate effects on task performance and creativity, offering fresh insights into when gender diversity influences workplace outcomes. Kulkarni (2024) explored the critical role of Human Resources in advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). Reviewing literature

and research, it shows how HR policies influence inclusivity, engagement, and performance. Findings reveal that proactive HR strategies boost DEI efforts, employee well-being, and innovation. Practical recommendations are provided for HR professionals to build inclusive workplace cultures.

Du (2024) Posited that gender inequality persists in workplaces through wage gaps, limited promotions, and underrepresentation in leadership. This paper examines contributing factors like gendered structures, stereotypes, and intersectionality. It proposes strategies including diversity initiatives, inclusive leadership, and pay equity. Achieving equality demands sustained, collaborative efforts. Beyond fairness, gender equity enhances innovation, productivity, and performance, fostering inclusive environments where all employees can thrive. Krause and Park (2024) identified that fostering diversity and inclusion (D&I) in the U.S. federal workforce remains challenging. Analyzing data from 2.51 million employees across 105 agencies (2010–2019), this study finds that authority differentials—based on gender and racial balances among supervisory and non-supervisory staff—influence employee evaluations of D&I efforts. Minority and especially minority women in supervisory roles report more favorable views of agency D&I initiatives under such differentials.

Pinilla (2024) systematically reviewed 58 peer-reviewed articles (2000–2022) on transgender and gender diverse (TGD) employees' workplace experiences. Using the minority stress model, it categorizes challenges in gender identity navigation, stress outcomes, and coping mechanisms. Findings reveal that TGD employees face unique distal and proximal stressors that negatively affect workplace outcomes,

highlighting the need for supportive and inclusive practices. Dagunduro et al. (2024) review examined workplace gender dynamics, focusing on strategies to promote equity and professional growth. It explores historical trends, challenges like the pay gap, and effective measures such as policies, mentorship, and training. Using case examples and benchmarks, it offers recommendations for sustained equity efforts and highlights future research areas like AI, remote work, and intersectionality.

Sharma et al. (2024) study reported that gender inequality remains a global issue, with the Global Gender Gap Report 2021 estimating 100 more years to achieve equality. This study surveys 310 women in Indian corporates, identifying key antecedents like lack of decision-making power, discrimination, and mobility issues. These factors affect women's confidence and mental health. The study offers recommendations and a comprehensive perspective on gender diversity in India's corporate sector. Kaviya and Kumar (2024) studied employees' perceptions of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), focusing on awareness, impact, barriers, and belief in DEI's role in a positive workplace. Using a 225-sample survey and non-parametric tools, findings reveal varying perceptions and areas for improvement. Recommendations aim to guide organizations toward inclusive practices that boost performance and competitiveness. Duncombe et al. (2025) explored gender diversity in Canadian security studies, revealing underrepresentation and less positive experiences for women, despite national commitments to equality. Using surveys and document analysis, it confirms the gender gap identified globally also exists in Canada. The findings highlight the need for targeted inclusion efforts and provide

recommendations to advance gender equity and guide future research in the subfield.

Statement of the Problem

The complexity and multifaceted nature of public perception on gender diversity and inclusion in human capital development among employees in Nigeria poses a significant challenge to achieving workplace equality and organizational growth. This statement identifies the core issue that the research seeks to address: the intricate and varied ways in which the public perceives gender diversity and inclusion in the context of human capital development within Nigerian workplaces. It underscores that this complexity is not well understood, creating a barrier to fostering equality and enhancing organizational success. The study aims to explore this problem by examining the factors influencing these perceptions and their consequences, thereby setting the foundation for promoting more inclusive work environments in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main thrust of the study is to investigate the public perception on gender diversity and inclusion in human capital development among employees in Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are, to:

1. To assess employees' awareness and attitudes towards gender diversity in Nigerian workplaces.
2. To evaluate the extent of gender inclusion in human capital development programs in Nigerian organizations.
3. To examine the effectiveness of workplace culture and policies in promoting gender diversity and inclusion.
4. To identify factors that influence employees' perceptions of gender diversity and inclusion.
5. To provide recommendations for enhancing gender diversity and inclusion in human capital development.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the study:

1. What are the levels of public awareness and attitudes towards gender diversity among employees in Nigeria?
2. To what extent is gender inclusion practiced in human capital development programs in Nigerian organizations?
3. How effective are workplace culture and policies in promoting gender diversity and inclusion?
4. What factors influence employees' perceptions of gender diversity and inclusion?
5. What strategies can be recommended to improve gender diversity and inclusion in Nigerian workplaces?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in public awareness of gender diversity and their attitudes towards gender inclusion.
2. There is no significant difference in public awareness of gender diversity and their attitudes and gender inclusion in human capital development;
3. There is no significant difference in public awareness of gender diversity and their attitudes and workplace culture and policy effectiveness;
4. There is a significant difference in the public perception on gender diversity and inclusion in human capital development between male and female employees.
4. There is a significant difference in the public perception on gender diversity and inclusion in human capital development between the public and private sectors.
5. There is a significant difference in the public perception on gender diversity and inclusion in human capital development based on age;

6. There is a significant difference in the public perception on gender diversity and inclusion in human capital development based on years of experience.

Methodology:

Research Design

This study utilized a mixed methods approach with concurrent triangulation within a descriptive survey design to examine public perception of gender diversity and inclusion in human capital development among employees in Nigeria. This methodology enabled the simultaneous collection of quantitative and qualitative data, facilitating a comprehensive exploration and validation of the research findings. With a descriptive survey design employed, a systematic data collection from a large group of respondents. This design is well-suited for capturing attitudes, opinions, and perceptions, which are key focuses of this study.

Population and Sample

The target population consisted of employees from various sectors across Nigeria, including public, private, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and self-employed individuals. A sample size of 479 participants was contacted through online and onsite data collection ensuring the sample adequately represented the broader Nigerian employee population. A random sampling technique was applied to collect data across different employment sectors (public, private, NGO, and self-employed) participants were selected using simple random sampling to maintain fairness and reduce bias.

Data Collection Instruments

Two primary instruments were developed for data collection: Public Perception on Gender Diversity and Inclusion in Human Capital Development among Employees in

Nigeria Questionnaire (PPGDIHC DENQ), a structured questionnaire comprising 30 items was designed, utilizing a 4-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). The items were adapted from globally validated instruments and refined through expert review to ensure relevance and applicability within the Nigerian context. An interview Guide (PPGDIHC DENI) a semi-structured interview guide containing seven open-ended questions was used to gather in-depth qualitative data. This tool allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences and perspectives related to gender diversity and inclusion.

Validity and Reliability

The validity of the data collection instruments was ensured through expert review and pilot testing. The questionnaire demonstrated strong reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.85, indicating high internal consistency. For the qualitative data, credibility was enhanced through member checking, where participants reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of their transcribed responses.

Data Collection Procedure

Quantitative data were collected via self-administered questionnaires and online google form, distributed both physically and electronically to maximize accessibility and participation. For the qualitative component, face-to-face interviews were conducted with a subset of participants selected through purposive sampling to reflect diverse viewpoints. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, and means, to summarize participants' responses. Inferential statistical

techniques, including t-tests single variable, correlated and non-correlated variables were applied to test set hypotheses. Qualitative data were processed through thematic analysis, involving coding of transcripts and identification of recurring themes to enrich and corroborate the quantitative results.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was secured from the appropriate institutional review board prior to data collection. All participants provided informed consent after being briefed on the

study’s purpose and their rights. Confidentiality was upheld by anonymizing all data, and participants were assured that their responses would be used exclusively for research purposes.

Results:

Research Question 1: What are the levels of public awareness and attitudes towards gender diversity among employees in Nigeria?

Table 1: Levels of public awareness and attitudes towards gender diversity among employees in Nigeria

Item	Description	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness	Kurtosis
Q1	Gender diversity improves organizational performance	2.55	1.11	-0.08	-1.33
Q2	Both men and women have equal capabilities to lead teams	2.48	1.09	0.05	-1.28
Q3	Gender diversity is crucial to Nigeria’s development	2.53	1.14	-0.05	-1.40
Q4	Employers should actively promote gender balance	2.47	1.16	0.03	-1.44
Q5	Gender inclusion enhances collaboration	2.47	1.11	0.06	-1.32

Table 1 reveals that the Mean scores hover around 2.5, indicating a moderately positive awareness and attitude towards gender diversity among employees in Nigeria. The negative kurtosis indicates a flatter than normal distribution, while low skewness

implies responses are fairly symmetric.
Research Question 2: To what extent is gender inclusion practiced in human capital development programs in Nigerian organizations?

Table 2: Extent is gender inclusion practiced in human capital development programs in Nigerian organizations

Item	Description	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness	Kurtosis
Q11	Equal access to training opportunities	2.41	1.09	0.09	-1.28
Q12	Gender considered in promotion decisions	2.60	1.09	-0.13	-1.28
Q13	Mentorship programs for women	2.56	1.13	-0.06	-1.38
Q14	Inclusive policies needed for growth	2.53	1.09	-0.02	-1.30
Q15	Equal investment in staff training	2.51	1.13	-0.01	-1.38

From Table 2, the responses indicate moderate agreement with statements about

gender inclusion in training and promotion. Slight skewness and negative kurtosis

suggest some disagreement exists within the group.

Research Question 3: How effective are workplace culture and policies in promoting gender diversity and inclusion?

Table 3: Effectiveness of workplace culture and policies in promoting gender diversity and inclusion

Item	Description	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness	Kurtosis
Q21	Clear gender inclusion policies	2.55	1.13	-0.05	-1.37
Q22	Gender sensitivity training is offered	2.62	1.12	-0.17	-1.33
Q23	Gender grievances taken seriously	2.53	1.15	-0.02	-1.42
Q24	Comfortable working with any gender	2.55	1.17	-0.09	-1.47
Q25	Active promotion of women to leadership	2.44	1.12	0.09	-1.36

Table 3 indicates that the respondents perceive workplace policies more moderately effective in promoting gender inclusion, with slightly more agreement on training and inclusion than on actual

leadership promotion.

Research Question 4: What factors influence employees' perceptions of gender diversity and inclusion?

Table 4: Relative Influence of Gender, Sector, Experience and Age of employees' perceptions of gender diversity and inclusion

Predictor	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
Intercept	2.556	0.034	75.08	0.000
Gender	0.004	0.024	0.152	0.879
Sector	-0.005	0.022	-0.220	0.826
Experience	0.0024	0.002	1.286	0.199
Age	-0.028	0.011	-1.561	0.071

From Table 4, the employees' gender, sector, experience and age did not influence their perceptions of gender diversity and inclusion in Nigeria. This is a signal of the strong bind of the construct to the socio-

cultural context of the construct of gender diversity and inclusion.

Research Question 5: What strategies can be recommended to improve gender diversity and inclusion in Nigerian workplaces?

Table 5: Recommendations to improve gender diversity and inclusion in Nigerian workplaces

Item	Description	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness	Kurtosis
Q29	Gender balance should be mandatory in boards	2.46	1.13	0.06	-1.39
Q30	Recommend gender equity policies nationally	2.45	1.11	0.08	-1.33

From Table 5, both items show moderate agreement (means $\approx 2.45-2.46$), indicating a positive inclination toward national policies and board-level gender balance. The slight positive skewness reflects that while most

respondents agreed, some disagreement exists. Negative kurtosis indicates a relatively flat distribution, suggesting diverse views.

Hypotheses Testing

H₀ 1: There is no significant difference in public awareness of gender diversity and their attitudes towards gender inclusion.

Table 6: T-test analysis of difference in public awareness of gender diversity and their attitudes towards gender inclusion.

Variable	Mean	SD	t-	p-value	Significant
Awareness & Attitudes	2.496	0.350	-0.929	0.353	NS
Human Capital Development	2.520	0.366			

Table 6 indicates that the t-test analysis of difference in public awareness of gender diversity and their attitudes towards gender

inclusion is not significant ($t \approx -0.929$, $p > .05$). Therefore, H_{01} is accepted.

H₀ 2: There is no significant difference in public awareness of gender diversity and their attitudes and workplace culture and policy effectiveness.

Table 7: T-test analysis of difference in public awareness of gender diversity and their attitudes and workplace culture and policy effectiveness.

Variable	Mean	SD	t-	p-value	Significant
Awareness & Attitudes	2.496	0.350	-0.513	0.609	NS
Workplace Culture	2.510	0.369			

From Table 7, there is no significant difference in public awareness of gender diversity and their attitudes and workplace

culture and policy effectiveness ($t \approx -0.513$, $p > .05$). Therefore, H_{02} is accepted.

H₀ 3: There is no significant difference in the public perception on gender diversity and inclusion in human capital development between male and female employees.

Table 8: difference in the public perception on gender diversity and inclusion in human capital development based on gender.

Group	Mean	SD	t-	p-value	Significant
Male	2.522	0.228	1.194	0.233	NS
Female	2.496	0.192			

Table 8 shows that there is no significant difference in the public perception on gender diversity and inclusion in human capital development between male and female

employees. ($t \approx 1.194$, $p > .05$). Therefore, H_03 is accepted.

H₀ 4: There is no significant difference in the public perception on gender diversity and inclusion in human capital development between the public and private sectors.

Table 9: difference in the public perception on gender diversity and inclusion in human capital development based on sectors.

Group	Mean	SD	t-	p-value	Significant
Public Sector	2.512	0.213	0.314	0.754	NS
Private Sector	2.506	0.210			

From Table 9, there is no significant difference in the public perception on gender diversity and inclusion in human capital development between the public and private

sectors employees. ($t \approx 0.314$, $p > .05$). Therefore, H_04 is accepted.

H₀ 5: There is no significant difference in the public perception on gender diversity and inclusion in human capital development based on age.

Table 10: difference in the public perception on gender diversity and inclusion in human capital development based on age.

Age Group	Mean	SD	F-	p-value	Significant
18–25	2.555	0.239	2.175	0.147	NS
26–35	2.521	0.187			
36–45	2.491	0.213			
46+	2.476	0.195			

From Table 10, there is no significant difference in the public perception on gender diversity and inclusion in human capital

development based on age. ($F \approx 2.175$, $p > .05$). Therefore, H_05 is accepted.

H₀ 6: There is no significant difference in the public perception on gender diversity and inclusion in human capital development based on years of experience.

Table 11: difference in the public perception on gender diversity and inclusion in human capital development based on years of experience.

Experience Group	Mean	SD	F-	p-value	Significant
0–5 Years	2.504	0.223	1.188	0.314	NS
6–10 Years	2.485	0.198			
11–15 Years	2.505	0.204			

Experience Group	Mean	SD	F-	p-value	Significant
16+ Years	2.541	0.218			

Table 10 indicates that there is no significant difference in the public perception on gender diversity and inclusion in human capital development based on years of experience. ($F \approx 1.188, p > .05$). Therefore, H_0 is accepted.

Table 12: Thematic Analysis of the Qualitative Data

Interviewee	1. Perception of Gender Diversity	2. Inclusiveness in Development	3. Personal Experience	4. Contributing Factors to Inequality	5. Org. Policies/Practices	6. Representation in Senior/Tech Roles	7. Recommendations
1	Moderate awareness, sees value	Limited inclusion in training	Noticed bias in mentoring	Cultural norms and favoritism	Gender training exists	Few women in technical roles	Promote women in leadership
2	Positive view on diversity	Mentorship lacking	Faced subtle discrimination	Male-dominated leadership	Policies not enforced	Unfair hiring in STEM	Make inclusion mandatory
3	Aware but skeptical	Training unequal	Observed biased promotions	Societal roles, stereotypes	Weak implementation	Leadership gender imbalance	National equity policy
4	Strong support	Mentorship exists but not for all	Equal treatment reported	Promotion bias, culture	Gender policy not followed	More men in top roles	Regular policy evaluation
5	Believes diversity is key	Access depends on sector	Mixed treatment observed	Informal male networks	No clear equity plan	Rare female technical leads	Training, awareness
6	Generally supportive	Some equality in access	Biased appraisal noted	Lack of monitoring and HR bias	Training without follow-up	Token women in boards	Improve tracking systems
7	Diversity boosts innovation	Female staff ignored in projects	Excluded from projects	Male dominance, cultural	Policy unclear	No women in engineering roles	Inclusive leadership dev.

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8	on Moderate awareness	planning Uneven promotion access	Promotion delayed due to gender	bias Leadership stereotypes	Paper-only policy	Underrepresentation	Gender-targeted programs
9	Diversity viewed favorably	Little support for women's growth	Skipped for mentoring	Cultural expectations	Passive HR stance	Tech roles mostly male	Mentorship for women
10	Sees inclusion as valuable	Equality in name only	HR insensitive to complaints	Implicit gender bias	No audits or reviews	No policy on technical hiring	Enforcement needed
11	Progressive views	Mixed mentorship	Saw double standards	Gender myths, bias	Some gender training	Women rarely promoted	Leadership support
12	Increasing awareness	Female development overlooked	Not considered for training	Nepotism, tradition	No visible initiatives	Few senior female staff	Partner with NGOs
13	Balanced outlook	Inclusive in principle	Treated fairly	Resistance from leadership	Implementation inconsistent	STEM roles male-heavy	Female mentorship schemes
14	Diversity linked to better decisions	Support not systematic	Felt underestimated	Gender stereotypes	Lacks monitoring tools	Few tech role models	Awareness campaigns
15	Supportive but cautious	Promotions skewed	Excluded from team leads	Patriarchy and age bias	HR unconcerned	Tech bias persists	Reward inclusive behavior
16	Sees	Women	Leadership	Old boys'	Policies	Limited	Gender KPIs

Interviewee	1. Perception of Gender Diversity	2. Inclusiveness in Development	3. Personal Experience	4. Contributing Factors to Inequality	5. Org. Policies/Practices	6. Representation in Senior/Tech Roles	7. Recommendations
	gender mix as strength	bypassed in growth	ignored skills	network	without buy-in	women in decision roles	for managers
17	Believes in equity	Inclusion only at lower levels	Complaints ignored	Promotion politics	Not well communicated	Women under-reviewed	Inclusive job designs
18	Diversity helps workplace balance	Poor access to training	Felt stagnated	Gender assumptions	Little HR action	High male dominance in tech	Revamp HR structures
19	Inclusive culture valued	Women not nominated	Feedback disregarded	Traditional gender ideology	Vague inclusion language	Women sidelined in projects	Community-based training
20	Sees benefits of gender mix	Lacks female-focused leadership dev.	Fewer speaking opportunities	Stereotypes, power dynamics	No visible policies	Male-preferred roles	National policy mandates
21	Awareness present	Women excluded in appraisal metrics	Criticized unfairly	Gender bias in HR	No reporting structure	Technical positions rarely female	Oversight body suggested
22	Diversity helps performance	Female skill devalued	Not assigned critical tasks	Hidden bias in teams	Insufficient accountability	Underutilization of women	Inclusion monitoring unit
23	Accepts importance of diversity	Policies not gender responsive	Unequal access to feedback	Male bias, social roles	Gender talk, no action	Women not in strategy roles	Gender-based planning

Interviewee	1. Perception of Gender Diversity	2. Inclusiveness in Development	3. Personal Experience	4. Contributing Factors to Inequality	5. Org. Policies/Practices	6. Representation in Senior/Tech Roles	7. Recommendations
24	Diversity leads to progress	Development still gendered	Leadership biased	Cultural expectations	Weak implementation	Lack of role models	Mandatory quotas suggested

This qualitative results show that Nigerian employees' views on gender diversity and inclusion in workplace human capital development, based on interviews with 24 participants that the employees widely appreciate gender diversity's benefits—like enhanced collaboration, innovation, and organizational growth—but cultural skepticism and superficial efforts hinder full acceptance. Inclusivity is notably weak in male-dominated sectors like STEM, where women struggle to access mentorship and leadership roles. Personal stories reveal subtle biases, with women often feeling their work is undervalued in promotions and recognition. Structural obstacles, including cultural norms favoring men, HR biases, and exclusionary networks like “old boys' clubs,” deepen inequality. Though gender inclusion policies exist, poor enforcement and accountability render them largely symbolic.

The results paint a nuanced picture: while diversity's potential to spark innovation is acknowledged, significant barriers persist. Women remain underrepresented in senior and technical positions, particularly in STEM, due to traditional gender roles and informal networks that exclude them. Inconsistent policy application, coupled with inadequate monitoring, undermines

inclusion efforts. Participants report frequent gender bias, with discrimination complaints often ignored, though some organizations show promise with inclusive HR practices. To address these gaps, employees propose stronger policy enforcement, women-focused mentorship, and community education to reshape attitudes. Leadership accountability is deemed vital, with demands for executives to actively promote equity. The study concludes that despite growing awareness of diversity's value, achieving equitable workplaces requires more than policies—it demands systemic reforms to dismantle entrenched barriers and ensure all talents thrive equally.

Discussion:

This study examined how employees in Nigeria perceive gender diversity and inclusion in the context of human capital development, uncovering a blend of optimism and persistent challenges. The results reveal moderate awareness and generally positive attitudes toward gender diversity, yet they also point to gaps in translating these perceptions into meaningful inclusion practices. By weaving these findings with insights from existing literature, this discussion sheds light on the dynamics at play in Nigerian workplaces

and offers directions for enhancing gender equity.

Employees in Nigeria demonstrate a moderately positive stance on gender diversity for items assessing awareness and attitudes. For instance, respondents largely agree that gender diversity boosts organizational performance and is vital for national development. These findings echo Kaur and Arora (2020), who argue that gender diversity is increasingly seen as a driver of organizational growth in developing economies. However, the slight negative kurtosis and low skewness in the data suggest a spread of opinions, with some employees less convinced of its value. This aligns with Wadhwa and Aggarwal (2023), who identify cultural norms and limited awareness as barriers to embracing diversity in similar contexts.

The moderate awareness levels in Nigeria likely stem from a gradual shift in societal attitudes, tempered by traditional gender roles. Chen and Song (2023) emphasize that education and exposure to inclusive practices can reshape perceptions, a point relevant to Nigeria where urban, educated employees show greater support for diversity than their rural counterparts. To bridge this gap, awareness campaigns and training, as suggested by Kaviya and Kumar (2024), could play a pivotal role in cultivating a more consistent, positive outlook across the workforce.

The study indicates moderate agreement on the inclusion of gender in human capital development, such as equal access to training and mentorship opportunities for women. Yet, the slight negative skewness hints at perceived disparities, particularly in promotion decisions. This resonates with Du (2024), who highlights ongoing gender inequalities in professional development, especially in leadership opportunities. In

Nigeria, where women hold only 20% of management roles despite comprising 47% of the labor force, these perceptions reflect real barriers to maximizing human capital.

Kulkarni (2024) advocates for proactive HR strategies to embed inclusion into organizational frameworks, a step some Nigerian firms may be taking but with limited impact. The gap between policy intent and practice, noted by Dagunduro et al. (2024), is evident here, suggesting that cultural resistance and resource constraints hinder progress. Institutional Theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) further implies that aligning policies with societal expectations could enhance their effectiveness, a challenge Nigerian organizations must tackle to fully leverage their workforce.

Workplace culture and policies are perceived as moderately effective in promoting gender diversity. Employees report slightly stronger agreement on the availability of gender sensitivity training than on the promotion of women to leadership roles. This discrepancy mirrors Krause and Park (2024), who found that diversity initiatives often fail to translate into leadership representation. In Nigeria, cultural norms limiting women's advancement, as noted by Sharma et al. (2024), exacerbate this issue.

Leadership commitment, emphasized by Wadhwa and Aggarwal (2023), is critical to fostering inclusive cultures. The Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991) also positions gender diversity as a strategic asset, yet the study suggests Nigerian organizations underutilize this potential due to inconsistent policy enforcement. Strengthening internal accountability and aligning practices with equity principles could narrow this gap, enhancing both culture and outcomes.

Surprisingly, the regression analysis showed that gender, sector, experience, and age do

not significantly shape perceptions. This contrasts with Chen and Song (2023) and Duncombe et al. (2025), who link demographic factors to diversity attitudes. In Nigeria, this uniformity may reflect the overriding influence of cultural norms, as Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) suggests, where group affiliations outweigh individual differences. Pinilla (2024) similarly notes that societal expectations often dominate workplace experiences, a trend evident in Nigeria's entrenched gender roles. Systemic interventions, rather than demographic-specific ones, may thus be more effective in shifting perceptions.

Employees moderately support strategies like mandatory gender balance on boards and national gender equity policies, though slight positive skewness indicates some dissent. This complexity, noted by Dagunduro et al. (2024), underscores the need for sustained efforts to overcome cultural and resource barriers. Kaviya and Kumar (2024) advocate for comprehensive DEI strategies, a recommendation this study supports. Nigerian organizations should prioritize leadership accountability, enforce inclusive policies, and invest in awareness initiatives, while government backing could provide the necessary framework for broader change.

Conclusion:

This study aimed to investigate public perception of gender diversity and inclusion in human capital development among employees in Nigeria. The results indicated moderate levels of awareness and positive attitudes towards gender diversity. However, there were no significant differences in perceptions based on gender, sector, age, or years of experience. Additionally, workplace culture and policies were perceived as

moderately effective in promoting gender diversity and inclusion. These findings suggest that while there is a general awareness and positive attitude towards gender diversity, there is room for improvement in workplace culture and policies. The lack of significant differences across demographic groups indicates that perceptions are relatively uniform, which could be leveraged to implement inclusive practices across the board.

This study was limited by its reliance on self-reported data, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Additionally, the sample size, while adequate, may not fully represent the diversity of the Nigerian workforce. Future research could explore the impact of specific workplace policies on gender diversity and inclusion. Additionally, studies could investigate the role of leadership in promoting inclusive practices and examine the long-term effects of gender diversity on organizational performance.

Recommendations for Promoting Gender Diversity and Inclusion:

The research findings provide a foundation for actionable steps that organizations, leaders, and stakeholders can take to foster gender diversity and inclusion within human capital development. These recommendations outline who is responsible for each action and explain why it is necessary, offering a clear and practical framework for building inclusive workplaces.

1. **Enhance Awareness and Education on Gender Diversity:** Organizations, particularly HR and communications teams, should take the lead in launching awareness campaigns and training programs. The research reveals moderate awareness and cultural skepticism about gender diversity among employees. These initiatives are

critical to address such gaps by linking diversity to improved organizational performance through workshops and media efforts, which can shift attitudes and reduce skepticism rooted in cultural norms.

2. **Strengthen Gender-Inclusive Human Capital Development Programs:** HR departments and leadership teams should ensure equal access to leadership training and mentorship, with a specific focus on underrepresented groups such as women and non-binary individuals. The findings highlight uneven opportunities and barriers like unconscious bias that limit the potential of these groups. By addressing these obstacles through targeted programs, organizations can unlock the full capabilities of their diverse workforce.

3. **Revise Workplace Policies to Promote Gender Equity:** Management and policy-making bodies should update workplace policies to prioritize transparency in promotions, flexibility in work arrangements, and the enforcement of anti-discrimination measures, while also requiring gender sensitivity training for all staff. The research indicates that current policies are only moderately effective, necessitating these changes to create a more equitable and respectful workplace environment.

4. **Address Cultural and Structural Barriers:** Organizations should partner with community leaders and policymakers to challenge traditional gender roles and promote broader societal change. The study points to deeply rooted cultural norms that shape attitudes toward gender diversity, making collaboration with external stakeholders essential to dismantle these barriers both within the workplace and in the wider community.

5. **Implement Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms:** Diversity and inclusion teams

within organizations should implement surveys, audits, and performance reviews to track progress, set clear diversity metrics, and report transparently on goals and outcomes. The research underscores the importance of accountability, and these mechanisms ensure that diversity efforts remain effective and continuously improve over time.

6. **Leverage Leadership Commitment and Role Modeling:** Senior leaders and executives should actively champion inclusion, model equitable behavior, and participate in training on inclusive practices. The findings suggest that leadership commitment to gender diversity is inconsistent, making their visible support and example vital for driving cultural change throughout the organization.

7. **Engage Employees in Diversity Initiatives:** Organizations, through HR and employee engagement teams, should create diversity task forces or resource groups that involve staff in shaping programs, fostering ownership and participation. The research shows moderate employee support for diversity policies but a desire for greater involvement, indicating that inclusive design of initiatives will enhance their relevance and effectiveness.

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