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Bridging diversity and career plateau: Perceptions of private secondary school teachers in Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between diversity and career plateau among teachers in selected private secondary schools in Isoko North, Ukwuani, and Ethiope East local Government Areas of Delta state, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were to ascertain the influence of demographic diversity (DD), cultural diversity (CD) and intellectual and academic diversity (IAD) on career plateau (CP). Survey research design was utilized in this investigation. The study population comprised of teachers in selected private secondary schools in Isoko North, Ukwuani, and Ethiope East local Government Areas of Delta state. However, convenience sampling technique was used to select 200 respondents. The responses obtained from the respondents were coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation statistics and simple linear regressions with the aid of SPSS version 23. The findings revealed that there is significant positive effect of demographic diversity ($t= 8.04$, $p<0.05$), cultural diversity ($t= 7.00$, $p<0.05$) and intellectual and academic diversity ($t= 7.59$, $p<0.05$) on career plateau. The study recommends that Organizations (private secondary schools) should comprehend how variability in DD, CD and IAD affect CP and then consider strategies such as inclusive policies and practices to ensure that diverse employees receive equal career progression opportunities and support to overcome potential plateaus. Through inclusive policies and practices, organization can alleviate the unexpected career plateau

effects associated with DD, CD and IAD, encourage an unbiased and conducive work environment for all employees.

Keywords: Diversity, Demographic Diversity, Cultural Diversity, Intellectual and Academic Diversity, Career Plateau.

INTRODUCTION

Many countries are in pursuit of development and progress across various sectors of the economy, with educational sector being one of the key focuses. Nigeria is not excluded in this regard. Secondary schools play a fundamental role in molding the future by raising and sustaining the next generation of professionals and leaders. Teachers in secondary schools play an important role in the progress and development of the educational sector because they provide guidance to students in their academic journeys. Nevertheless, the educational terrain in Nigeria, similar to every other nation around the world, is witnessing significant changes. A significant part of this transformation is the increasing commendation of the importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace (Abdulhakim and Shimelis, 2021; Inegbedion, Eze, Abiola, Adedoyin & Adebanji, 2020).

Diversity refers to the multiplicity of differences among individuals, encompassing their gender, age, race, sexual orientation, intellectual capacity, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, and others (Igbomor, 2025). Recently, there has been a big push to further advance diversity and inclusion in academic settings. This is not all about doing the right thing; it is also functional and beneficial for organizations. Studies have indicated that diverse teams can trigger creativity, enhance overall performance and also enhance problem-solving skills (Chepkemoi, Rop & Chepkwony, 2022; Kundu, Bansal & Pruthi, 2019). Indeed, the educational sector in Nigeria has witness considerably high level of growth and change in recent years, and the role of teachers in building the future of students is indispensable (Anjiri, 2018).

The student body is incredibly diverse, because they all come from different cultural background. However, this diversity is also reflected in the teaching staff, which tends to be dominated by individuals from specific ethnic, and gender groups. In fact every man is a representative of his own culture and that accounts for the reason why there is a dichotomy in personality, perception, opinion, value, preferences, life orientation, intellectual capacity, openness to experience and behavior of individuals. This difference raises important questions about how diversity impacts the professional development opportunities available to teachers in Nigeria.

While diversity is recommendable, there is a need to carefully examine how it affects specific aspect of teachers' careers. One area of concern that should be given attention is career plateau among teachers in secondary schools. A career plateau implies a stage where possibilities for advancement are limited, leading to a feeling of stagnation in professional development (Innocent, Felix, Richard, Nkene & Asah, 2017). This state can be overwhelming, causes psychological disorder and potentially linked to job dissatisfaction, noticeable declined performance, and even turnover. An individual is said to have reached a career plateau when he/she, finds his/her self at a standstill in his/her professional journey, where growth and advancement seem to come to a halt or slow down significantly (Devi & Basariya, 2017). This plateau arises from multiple factors, including personal traits, institutional rules and external pressures. The interplay of diversity as well as its impact on career progression is somehow complex, encompassing various elements. In the academic environment of Delta State, particularly in private secondary schools, the study of diversity is crucial in determining whether teachers experience career plateau.

The current issue our study seeks to address is to determine how various aspects of diversity (demographic, cultural and intellectual and academic diversity) relate to career plateau in

selected private secondary schools in Isoko North, Ukwuani, and Ethiope East local Government Areas of Delta State. While diversity as a concept is often celebrated, its effects on teachers' career path, particularly in Delta State, remain poorly understood. It is therefore, important to carefully look at this issue to ensure that all teachers are not held back by diversity-related factors and also have equal chances for career growth and development.

Research Hypotheses

The following formulated hypotheses were tested.

Ho_1: There is no significant effect of demographic diversity on career plateau

Ho_2: There is no significant effect of cultural diversity on career plateau

Ho_3: There is no significant effect of intellectual and academic diversity on career plateau

Conceptual Framework

Diversity

Every institution is made up individuals who come together to achieve common pre-stated goals and objectives. However, these individuals come from different cultural background with distinct cultures, norms, belief and values resulting to difference in experience and academic achievement. Diversity refers to when people of different nationalities, cultures, etc. are part of a group or organization. It is the state of having or consisting of multiple aspects (Fadhili, Kiflemariam & Mwanzia, 2021). Diversity includes differences in educational and occupational backgrounds, social standing, geography, race, ethnicity, political and religious beliefs, sexual orientations, heritage, and life experiences (Igbomor, 2025). The term diversity has different aspects, including but not limited to: demographic diversity, cultural diversity and intellectual and academic diversity. Demographic diversity refers to **variety of observable personal characteristics** such as differences in terms of gender, sexual orientation and age (Nguyen, Yadav, Pande, Bhanot & Hasan, 2021; Odhiambo, Gachoka & Rambo, 2018). The existence of many racial, religious, and socioeconomic groups within a group, workplace, organization, or even community is referred to as cultural diversity. It symbolizes a variety of customs, languages, viewpoints, and experiences that influence how people communicate and collaborate. Intellectual and academic diversity simply refers to the **variety of ways people, reason, interpret information, and think** as well as **differences in scholarly characteristics** and **educational backgrounds** within an academic environment.

Career Plateau (CP)

CP is a term that has attracted many researchers. It is viewed as the stage at which employees find low possibility for upward mobility, no concern or interest in the present job and elongated time gap between promotions (Nwovuhoma & Malik, 2016; Farooq, & Tufail, 2017). Correspondingly, prolong periods of time spent performing the same job can give rise to burnout and boredom among employees (Nwovuhoma & Malik, 2016). CP has numerous negative effects, including, employee disengagement, job dissatisfaction, decreased performances, and increasing turnover intentions (Innocent, et al, 2017).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A research design is a carefully, detailed and well articulated procedures that the researcher uses to address certain research questions. It is meticulous, comprehensive, and clearly stated. A framework of methods and techniques chosen by a researcher to combine various study elements in a suitably logical manner in order to successfully handle the research issue is known as research design. A descriptive survey design was employed in this investigation.

Research Population

A population, which is a collection of individuals with particular characteristics who belong to a particular institutional or geographical area, is an essential part of research methodology (Willie, 2024). This idea creates the overall framework for developing research questions and hypotheses, laying the foundation for research undertakings. The population also provides

researchers with a comprehensive grasp of the group they are examining, which facilitates the investigation of a range of phenomena, according to Willie (2024). The total population of this study comprised of teachers in selected private secondary schools in Isoko North, Ukwuani, and Ethiope East local Government Areas of Delta state. However, convenience sampling technique was used to select 200 respondents out of which 177 were valid.

Research Instrument

Data were collected from the respondents using the questionnaire. The three (3) dimensions of diversity (demographic, cultural and intellectual and academic) were measured by three items each. Responses were obtained via a 4 point Likert scale with (4) = strongly agree to (1) = strongly disagree. Career plateau was also measured with three items via a 4 point Likert scale with (4) = strongly agree to (1) = strongly disagree

Reliability of Instrument

Instrument reliability is ensuring that an instrument used to evaluate the variables being studied consistently produces the same results. The level of consistency of a research tool or estimation of variance is known as reliability. The Cronbach alpha test was used to determine the research instrument's composition and stability. The results showed that the variables are good measure of what there were designed to measure. The instrument is above the bench mark of 0.5 which indicates that it is reliable. Table 1 displays the outcome.

Table 1

Cronbach's Alpha

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Demographic Diversity	0.79
Cultural Diversity	0.71
Intellectual and Academic Diversity	0.75
Career Plateau	0.74

Source: Researcher's Computation, (2025)

Method of data analysis

Multiple regression analysis, descriptive statistics, and the Pearson correlation coefficient were used to examine the data collected from research participants. The link between the research variables was determined using the Pearson correlation coefficient, and the effect of the independent factors on the dependent variable was determined using simple linear regression analysis.

Model Specification

$CP = f(DD, CD, IAD)$

$CP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 DD + E$……. (1)

$CP = \beta_{0+} \beta_1 CD + E$……. (2)

$CP = \beta_{0+} \beta_1 IAD + E$…….. (3)

Where;

CP = Career Plateau,

DD = Demographic Diversity,

CD = Cultural Diversity

IAD = Intellectual and Academic Diversity,

E = Error term.

βo, $\beta_{1,}$ = coefficient.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive statistics for the key variables of the study is presented in Table 2. These key variables include; demographic diversity (DD), cultural diversity (CD), intellectual and academic diversity (IAD), and career plateau (CP). DD had a mean value of 3.135 with a standard deviation of 0.684, meaning that respondents reported quite high levels of DD within their organizations, with moderate difference in responses. The minimum value of 1 and maximum value of 4, suggest a 4 point likert scale. Cultural diversity (CD) had a mean score

of 3.178 with a standard deviation of 0.539. This clearly connotes that CD is also perceived to be quite high among respondents, with less variability in responses. The values range from 1 to 4, indicating a 4 point likert scale. Also, intellectual and academic diversity (IAD) had a mean value of 2.916 with a corresponding standard deviation of 0.789, suggesting a moderate level of IAD, with little or no difference in responses. A 4 point likert scale was utilized which is reflected in the minimum value of 1 and maximum value of 4. Career plateau (CP) also had a mean score of 3.177, standard deviation of 0.626, implying that respondents also reported high experiences of CP, with little or no variation in responses. The minimum score is 1 and the maximum is 4, suggesting that a 4 point likert scale was used by the researchers.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of the Variables of the Study

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
Demographic Diversity (DD)	3.135	0.684	1	4
Cultural Diversity (CD)	3.178	0.539	1	4
Intellectual and Academic Diversity (IAD)	2.916	0.789	1	4
Career Plateau (CP)	3.177	0.626	1	4

Source: Researcher's Computation, (2025)

Correlation Analysis

Table 3 showed the correlation coefficients among the variables used in the study. The results indicated that DD has a positive correlation with CP (r = 0.5185). This conveys that as DD within organizations increases, employees are more probably to experience CP. Furthermore, CD is positively correlated with CP (r = 0.4668), indicating that higher levels of CD are associated with increased feelings of CP. In the same vein, IAD also shows a positive relationship with CP (r = 0.4965), suggesting that high difference in IAD tends to be linked with higher level of CP experiences among employees. Additionally, the independent variables are moderately correlated among themselves. For instance, DD is positively correlated with CD (r = 0.4975) and with IAD (r = 0.4617), while CD is also positively correlated with IAD (r = 0.4991). These moderate correlations indicate that organizations that exhibit high demographic diversity are also likely to reflect cultural and intellectual/academic diversity. However, none of the correlations are excessively high (i.e., above 0.80), suggesting that multicollinearity is unlikely to be a serious concern in further regression analysis.

Table 3

Result of Correlation Analysis

Variables	DD	CD	IAD	CP
DD	1.0000			
CD	0.4975	1.0000		
IAD	0.4617	0.4991	1.0000	
CP	0.5185	0.4668	0.4965	1.0000

Source: Researcher's Computation, (2025)

Other Diagnostic Tests

Presented in Table 4 is the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) that offers important diagnostic information with respect to the relationship among the independent variables in a regression model, with specific reference to multicollinearity issue. As indicated in Table 4, all VIF values obtained are notably low, with demographic diversity at 1.51, cultural diversity at 1.45, and intellectual and academic diversity at 1.45. The mean VIF of all the variables is 1.47, which is below the conventional threshold of 10, suggesting the absence of multicollinearity issue in the model. It is important to note that low VIFs means that the independent variables are independent to one another, and each gives different information to the regression equation without excessive overlap. Also, the 1/VIF shows the reciprocal of the VIF values, which further support the absence of multicollinearity issue. Therefore, the VIF values in Table 4 confirms the statistical robustness of the model, as the dimensions of diversity

included in the model are not too correlated that they affect the overall validity of the regression model.

Table 4

Variance Inflator Factor Results for Independent Variables

Variables	VIF	I/VIF
Demographic Diversity	1.51	0.660232
Cultural Diversity	1.45	0.690363
Intellectual and Academic Diversity	1.45	0.691854
Mean VIF	**1.47**	

Source: Researcher's Computation, (2025)

The Breusch-Pagan Lagrangian Multiplier (LM) test is a statistical test used by researchers to detect if there is heteroskedasticity in regression analysis. In other words, whether the variance of the errors is constant across all levels of the independent variables. Breusch-Pagan Lagrangian Multiplier assesses the null hypothesis that the error variance is constant (homoskedasticity) against the alternative hypothesis that error variance varies with one or more explanatory variables, which would undermine the reliability of regression estimates. As shown in Table 5, the test result presents the chi-squared statistic (chi2) and its probability value (Prob> chi2). Chi-squared value of 3.69 and a probability value of 0.0548 were obtained. The p-value or probability value clearly signifies the plausibility that the observed test statistic will occur if the null hypothesis of constant variance is true. A significance threshold of 0.05 is used in most applications and if the p-value (probability value) is below this threshold, it clearly suggests evidence against the null hypothesis and, thus, indicates the presence of heteroskedasticity. However, the result depicted in Table 5, has a p-value (probability value) of 0.0548, which is somewhat above the standard significance level of 0.05. What this implies is that the test fails to reject the null hypothesis at the 5% significance level, suggesting the absence of statistical and significant proof of heteroskedasticity in the residuals.

Table 5

Breusch and Pagan Lagrangian Multiplier test

Breusch-Pagan / Cook-Weisberg test for heteroskedasticity
HO: constant variance
Variables: fitted values of CPmean
Chi2 (1) = 3.69
Prob > chi2 = 0.0548

Source: Researcher's Computation, (2025)

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant effect of demographic diversity on career plateau

Hypothesis one stated that there is no significant effect demographic diversity (DD) on career plateau (CP). A regression analysis was conducted to test this hypothesis as presented in Table 6. The result showed a positive significant relationship between DD and CP. Also, a coefficient of 0.4747, standard error of 0.0590, t-value of 8.04 and a p-value of 0.000 were found. Meaning that one unit increase in DD would lead to 0.4747 increases in CP. This indicates that DD positively influences CP at a very strong level of significance, rejecting the null hypothesis of no effect and acceptance of the alternate hypothesis. The regression model accounts for about 27% of the variation in CP, as indicated by an R-squared value of 0.2688. The F-statistic of 64.71 ($p = 0.000$) also confirms that the regression model is statistically significant implying that DD is a significant predictor of CP in this study. This finding means that variations in demographic variables (age, gender, or ethnicity) significantly add to employees experiencing career slowdown or plateauing in their roles. It implies that demographic variables can affect advancement opportunities, through mechanisms like differential access to resources and study leave, discrimination, or social dynamics in the organization.

Table 6

Test of Hypothesis I (DD and CP)

F(1, 176)	=	64.71		
Prob > F	=	0.0000		
R-squared	=	0.2688		
CPmean	Coefficient	Std. Err.	T	p>| t |
DD	0.4746734	0.0590073	8.04	0.000
_constant	1.689881	0.1893035	8.93	0.000

Source: Researcher's Computation, (2025)

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant effect of cultural diversity on career plateau

The regression analysis as depicted in Table 7 examined the effect of **cultural diversity (CD)** on **career plateau (CP).** Hypothesis two stated that there is no significant effect of CD on CP. However, the results showed a **significant positive effect** of CD on CP. The regression result showed that the model is statistically significant with an F-value of 49.03 and a p-value < 0.05, which means the regression model as a whole fits the data well. The R-squared value is 0.2179, indicating that about **21.8% of the variance** in career plateau is explained by cultural diversity. The coefficient for **CD** is **0.5412** (standard error = 0.0773), which is statistically significant (t = 7.00, p < 0.05). This indicates that as CD increases by one unit, CP increases by about 0.5412 units. Since the p-value for CD is below 0.05, the analysis **rejects the null hypothesis** that CD has no significant effect on CP and accepted the alternate hypothesis.

Table 7

Test of Hypothesis II (CD and CP)

F(1, 176)	=	49.03		
Prob > F	=	0.0000		
R-squared	=	0.2179		
CPmean	Coefficient	Std. Err.	T	p>| t |
CD	0.5412426	0.0773004	7.00	0.000
_constant	1.457886	0.2491532	5.85	0.000

Source: Researcher's Computation, (2025)

Hypothesis Three

There is no significant effect of intellectual and academic diversity on career plateau

The regression results in Table 8 evaluated the effect of **intellectual and academic diversity (**IAD**)** on **career plateau (CP),** directly addressing Hypothesis three: "There is no significant effect of intellectual and academic diversity on career plateau." The findings show a **significant positive effect** of IAD on CP. The regression result is statistically significant with an F-value of 57.57 and a p-value < 0.05, indicating that the model fits the observed data well. The R-squared value of 0.2465 connotes that about **24.7% of the variation** in CP is explained by IAD. The **coefficient for** IAD is **0.3935** (standard error = 0.0519), statistically significant with a t-value of 7.59 (p < 0.05). This implies that a one-unit increase in IAD corresponds to a 0.3935 unit increase in CP, when other factors are held constant. Based on the p-value for IAD which is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is **rejected**. Thus, IAD does, in fact, have a significant effect on CP meaning greater IAD is associated with higher levels of perceived CP in the studied population.

Table 8
Test of Hypothesis III (IAD and CP)

F(1, 176)	=	57.57		
Prob > F	=	0.0000		
R-squared	=	0.2465		
CPmean	Coefficient	Std. Err.	T	p>| t |
IAD	0.3935261	0.0518653	7.59	0.000
_constant	2.030487	0.1566445	12.96	0.000

Source: Researcher's Computation, (2025)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study examined how diversity in the workplace affects career plateau among teachers in selected private secondary schools in Isoko North, Ukwuani, and Ethiope East local Government Areas of Delta state, Nigeria. A survey was carried out in this regard to obtain data from the study respondents so as to determine the link between the constructs of the study. The correlation result indicated that the three diversity variables (DD, CD, and IAD) employed in the study have positive relationships with CP. Increase in diversity at workplace leads to increased experiences of CP, meaning that while diverse workforce can prompt organizational richness or success, it also present intricacies that can make employees feel limited in career growth.

Test of hypotheses via regression, provided evidence to reject the stated null hypotheses. DD was found to have a significant positive influence on CP, accounting for about 27% of the variation. This emphasizes how demographic characteristics such as ethnicity, age and gender may hamper career development possibilities, by means of mechanisms like inequality of opportunities to career-enhancing resources and study leave or even bias. CD also showed a significant positive relationship with CP, explaining about 22% variation CD, emphasizing how distinct cultural backgrounds can impact career advancement perception and opportunity, maybe by reason of communication barriers or cultural clash (misunderstandings), difference in viewpoints, and experiences in the workplace. In like manner, IAD significantly influenced CP, accounting for around 25% variance in CP, meaning that difference in knowledge and academic achievement can also undermine employees' career advancement, leading to feelings of stagnation. Some employees may be very reluctant to advance in their career based on the fact that their colleagues at work have gone too far ahead of them in terms of academic qualifications and achievement (most especially when age is a challenge to them).

Organizations (private secondary schools) should comprehend how variability in DD, CD and IAD affect CP and then consider strategies such as inclusive policies and practices to ensure that diverse employees receive equal career progression opportunities and support to overcome potential plateaus. Through inclusive policies and practices, organization can alleviate the unexpected career plateau effects associated with DD, CD and IAD, encourage an unbiased and conducive work environment for all employees.

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