Research Article

Impact of Diversity, Equity And Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives on Employee Overall Performance in Selected Public Sector Organizations Nigeria

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Abstract - This study investigates the impact of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives on employee performance in selected Nigerian public sector organizations. It explores how DEI practices influence employee motivation, engagement, fairness in career advancement, teamwork, and productivity, while identifying the key challenges to effective DEI implementation. The study adopted a descriptive survey design, with a sample size of 400 respondents drawn from three major ministries in Nigeria: Finance, Foreign Affairs, and Education. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using both descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, and percentage distributions) and inferential techniques (Chi-square and Pearson correlation). Findings revealed that DEI initiatives have a significant positive relationship with employee motivation, engagement, and overall performance. Equitable and inclusive organizational policies were found to enhance fairness in career advancement and improve teamwork, innovation, and productivity. However, inadequate policy enforcement, limited leadership commitment, and socio-political barriers were identified as major challenges affecting DEI effectiveness. The study concludes that effective implementation of DEI principles promotes fairness, inclusion, and performance efficiency in Nigeria's public sector. It recommends institutionalising DEI frameworks, strengthening leadership accountability, and fostering continuous awareness and capacity building to sustain inclusivity and equity in public service administration.

Keywords - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Employee Performance, Public Sector.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) have emerged as essential pillars of modern organizational management and performance enhancement across both private and public sectors globally. The DEI programs, in turn, aim at equal treatment, representation, and engagement of every employee irrespective of gender, ethnicity, religion, age, socioeconomic status (Shore et al., 2018). The issue of equity in treatment and inclusivity among employees has become strategic in the public sector where delivery of services and national development are major roles. Based on the adoption of DEI practices, it is not only the employee satisfaction and engagement that improves but also innovation, teamwork, and organizational productivity (Roberson, 2019). Within the Nigerian public sector, however, the implementation of DEI frameworks remains inconsistent and often hindered by systemic challenges such as bureaucracy, political interference, and socio-cultural biases (Ogunyemi & Olamide, 2022).

Globally, organizations have recognized the transformative role of DEI initiatives in shaping workplace culture and improving employee performance. Research shows that organizational with inclusive policies are better placed to attain a greater level of productivity, creativity and organizational commitment than organizational that do not have these policies (Cox and Blake, 1991; Nishii, 2013). The focus on equity adds value by allowing

every staff to access the same chances during recruitment, promotion, and training, and inclusion allows making sure the varied viewpoints of the employees are appreciated during decision-making (Robinson et al., 2020). All these dimensions affect job satisfaction, motivation and general performance of the employees. In highly developed countries, the policies of DEI are incorporated into the system of governance, thus providing support to equity and responsibility in the provision of services (Shore and Chung, 2022). However, in developing contexts such as Nigeria, translating DEI ideals into actionable policies remains an ongoing challenge.

Nigeria's public sector is a microcosm of the nation's diversity, reflecting its multiplicity of ethnicities, religions, and cultural identities. Although diverse, the practice of human resource management in the civil service still remains influenced by the past trends of favoritism, ethnic discrimination, and gender inequality (Ekanem & Okon, 2021). Lack of well-organized DEI systems may result in the marginalization of a particular group, demoralized employees, and poor usage of human resources. Moreover, there are deep-rooted hierarchies and patronage systems that are impeding the way of fair representation and sufficient performance appraisal (Adetunji, 2020). These issues hinder the potential of the state institutions to maximize the workforce and provide effective services to the population. The filling of these gaps with the help of deliberate DEI approaches may foster a sense of inclusiveness, enhance the quality of interpersonal relations, and enhance organizational effectiveness (Nwokolo & Ogu, 2023).

Employee performance in the public sector is multidimensional, encompassing both individual productivity and collective contributions to institutional goals. DEI initiatives have been attributed to positive performance effects due to processes like enhanced psychological safety, trust, and belongingness (Shore et al., 2011). When employees feel that opportunities and representation is fair then they are likely to show greater commitment, creativity and efficiency in their jobs. On the contrary, being perceived to be discriminated against or excluded leads to resentment, withdrawal tendencies, and reduced productivity (Sabharwal, 2014). Therefore, the inclusion culture in the Nigerian institutions of the population should be developed, as only in this way the high performance and achieving national development objectives.

Despite growing advocacy for workplace diversity and inclusion, empirical studies assessing the impact of DEI initiatives on employee performance in Nigeria's public sector remain limited. The majority of the available studies have emphasized what is happening in individual organizations or generalized the concept of diversity in the workplace without analyzing its direct implication to performance (Ogunyemi & Olamide, 2022). The study thus aims to address this gap by assessing the impact of DEI programs on performance of the organizations in the Nigerian selected organizations in the public sector. The research also examines how the DEI practices enhance motivation, engagement, and equitable career advancement of the employees. This study's findings are expected to provide valuable insights for government agencies, policymakers, and administrators on how best to leverage DEI practices to optimize performance outcomes.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the growing recognition of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) as crucial determinants of employee performance and organizational success, their implementation within Nigeria's public sector remains inadequate and inconsistent. DEI frameworks have been implemented globally to support fairness and remove discrimination and improve the productivity of workforce by recognizing differences and providing equal opportunities (Roberson, 2019; Shore et al., 2018). Nevertheless, systemic problems of ethnic prejudice, gender inequality, favoritism, and political interference remain apparent in the Nigerian scenario and negatively affect inclusive practices in the workplace (Ogunyemi and Olamide, 2022; Ekanem and Okon, 2021). These issues not only impede the full integration of DEI principles into human resource management but also weaken employee morale, trust, and overall performance.

The Nigerian public sector is one of the most diverse work environments, reflecting the country's multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multicultural composition. However, the plurality is usually not managed well, which leads to the exclusionary habits that isolate a particular group or individual (Adetunji, 2020). Political favoritism and territorial interest are often used in several recruitment and promotional processes and do not depend on the competence or merit of an employee, which leads to a sense of unfairness and disparities among employees

(Nwokolo and Ogu, 2023). The lack of explicit DEI policies and accountability systems has hindered the possibility to deal with discrimination, work-related harassment, or the lack of equal access to career advancement opportunity. Consequently, employees' motivation and commitment to organizational goals are compromised, ultimately affecting institutional productivity and service delivery (Sabharwal, 2014).

Furthermore, while several private sector organizations in Nigeria have begun to institutionalize DEI initiatives as part of their corporate social responsibility and performance enhancement strategies, the public sector lags behind. A majority of government ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) do not have formal systems of DEI anchored or quantifiable indicators of inclusion that are in line with international best practice (Shore and Chung, 2022).

This has provided a chasm between policy rhetoric and practice where people maintain diversity as a principle but practical implementation of this diversity is scarcely realized (Cox & Blake, 1991). The scarcity of empirical studies investigating the relationship between DEI activities and employee performance in the context of the public sector in Nigeria also contributes to the difficulty, and policymakers and administrators with insufficient evidence to design effective interventions (Ogunyemi & Olamide, 2022).

The persistent underperformance of Nigeria's public sector has been attributed in part to weak human resource management systems and the inability to harness the potential of a diverse workforce. Employees who feel excluded or unfairly treated tend to exhibit reduced productivity, absenteeism, and low job satisfaction (Nishii, 2013). Therefore, understanding how DEI initiatives or the lack thereof affect employee performance in the public sector is both timely and necessary. This study is motivated by the need to bridge this gap by empirically examining the impact of DEI initiatives on overall employee performance in selected Nigerian public sector organizations. Specifically, it seeks to assess how diversity management, equitable treatment, and inclusion practices influence motivation, engagement, and productivity among public employees.

The research also aims to identify the barriers to effective DEI implementation and propose strategies to enhance inclusivity and performance in Nigeria's public institutions. Based on the identified problem, this study seeks to provide answers to the following key research questions to what extent do Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives influence overall employee performance in selected Nigerian public sector organizations? How do DEI practices affect employee motivation, engagement, and commitment within Nigeria's public institutions? What is the relationship between equitable treatment and fairness in career advancement among employees in selected public sector organizations? To what extent do inclusive workplace cultures enhance teamwork, innovation, and productivity among public sector employees? And what challenges hinder the effective implementation of DEI initiatives in Nigerian public sector organizations? The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives on employee overall performance in selected public sector organizations in Nigeria.

The specific objectives are to assess the extent to which DEI initiatives influence employee performance in selected Nigerian public sector organizations; determine how DEI initiatives affect employee motivation, engagement, and work commitment; examine the relationship between equity-based policies and fairness in career advancement within the Nigerian public sector; evaluate the extent to which inclusive organizational practices enhance teamwork, innovation, and productivity; and identify the major barriers to effective DEI implementation and propose strategies for improving inclusivity in the Nigerian public service.

Finally, to guide the investigation, the following null hypotheses are formulated Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives have no significant impact on employee overall performance in selected Nigerian public sector organizations; DEI initiatives have no significant relationship with employee motivation, engagement, and commitment in the Nigerian public sector; Equity-based policies and fairness in career advancement have no significant effect on employee performance in selected public sector organizations; Inclusive workplace cultures do not significantly influence teamwork, innovation, or productivity among employees in Nigerian public institutions; and there are no significant challenges affecting the implementation of DEI initiatives in the Nigerian public sector.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature materials were reviewed thematically in line with the themes defining the subject matter under investigation.

A. DEI Initiatives and Their Influence on Employee Performance in Selected Nigerian Public Sector Organizations

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives have become integral to contemporary human resource management because they determine how effectively employees contribute, innovate, and remain committed to achieving organizational objectives. In the largely ethnically, religiously, and generational diverse public sector of Nigeria, well-organized DEI measures can be used to minimize workplace conflicts, improve morale, and free up under-exploited human capital (Ogunyemi and Olamide, 2022). The existing body of empirical studies demonstrates that in the circumstances where diversity is managed in a proper way and inclusion is actively followed, employees have a higher level of job satisfaction, greater organizational commitment, and increased discretionary effort, all of which enhance overall performance (Roberson, 2019; Shore et al., 2018).

The influence of DEI on employee performance operates through both psychological and structural mechanisms. Inclusive working conditions provide employees with a sense of belonging, psychological safety, and perceived factors of fairness which promotes the willingness to share ideas and act, collaborate and take initiative instead of retreating or halting (Shore et al., 2011). Equity-based policies include transparent recruitment, merit-based promotion and equitable performance appraisal to structure the rewards with competence instead of political favors that are still common in most institutions of Nigerian citizens (Ekanem and Okon, 2021). Such practices will enhance the perception of organizational justice and build trust that will subsequently promote productivity and service delivery. The research on federal parastatals and university institutions in Nigeria has revealed that inclusive leadership and fair promotion policies are strongly associated with higher employee morale and efficiency (Nwokolo and Ogu, 2023).

However, the empirical evidence from Nigeria reveals that while DEI initiatives tend to improve performance outcomes, their effectiveness depends largely on implementation quality and organizational context. Cox and Blake (1991) proposed that diversity in its proper management can be a source of competitive advantage, whereas when managed poorly can cause tension and inefficiency. Equally, in the Nigerian government, diversity itself would not necessarily result in improved performance without an addition of equitable and inclusive management (Adetunji, 2020). As an example, there has been positive correlation between cultural diversity and employee satisfaction, but benefits have been in many cases nullified by the lack of inclusion practices (Nishii, 2013). Therefore, diversity will have to be handled strategically so that the differences become organizational assets rather than sources of division.

Several barriers hinder the translation of DEI principles into tangible performance gains in Nigeria's public service. Some of them include ongoing patronage, poor institutional accountability, the absence of DEI awareness among managers, and the uneven implementation of the Federal Character principle (Ogunyemi and Olamide, 2022). These lead to the continuation of perceived injustice and discrimination so that employees do not want to work hard out of their own will. In a case where promotions or appointment are perceived to be politically influenced, this would result in a lack of trust in the system which lowers the commitment and productivity of the employees (Sabharwal, 2014). Therefore, addressing systemic inequities is critical to realizing the performance benefits of DEI initiatives.

To maximize the impact of DEI on employee performance, Nigerian public institutions must implement practical interventions that promote inclusion, fairness and job satisfaction among public sector employees which continues to decline, limiting their ability to meet growing public expectations and developmental needs (Nwambuko, 2025). Such interventions are inclusive management leadership training, open recruitment and promotion, mentorship for underrepresented populations, and inclusion scoring as part of performance reviews (Shore and Chung, 2022). Data collected on Nigerian ministries and Universities reveals that, when leaders exhibit inclusive behaviours and when the DEI policies are incorporated in human resource systems, the

employees report high engagement levels, teamwork, and greater innovation (Roberson, 2019; Nwokolo and Ogu, 2023).

In summary, DEI initiatives significantly influence employee performance in Nigerian public sector organizations, but the extent of their impact depends on institutional commitment, managerial competence, and the presence of equitable systems. When inclusivity, fairness and representation into the organizational culture enhances the motivation, satisfaction and engagement terms, which excel overall performance among the employees. With further reforms of the public service in Nigeria, it will be critical to adopt and institutionalize the DEI frameworks to create an efficient, equitable, and performance workforce (Shore et al., 2018; Ogunyemi and Olamide, 2022).

B. DEI Initiatives: Effects on Employee Motivation, Engagement, and Work Commitment

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives are designed not only to ensure fair representation and treatment in workplace practices but also to create environments in which employees feel valued and motivated to give their best. Motivation, engagement, and commitment are closely interconnected in most environments and including in the public sector organizations; DEI initiatives have the potential to affect all these in a mutually reinforcing.

   a) Employee Motivation: Motivation refers to the intrinsic and extrinsic drives that cause employees to expend effort in their tasks. DEI programs do not have no impacts when it comes to motivation as they drive perceived fairness, recognition, and growth opportunities. For example, the study of perceived workplace fairness alongside transformational leadership in the Nigeria Police found that when employees perceive fairness in opportunities and treatment, their work motivation is significantly higher; especially when leadership style complements fairness (Dada & Adebayo, 2005). In the MTN Nigeria study of diversity and inclusion, religious and ethnic diversity measures positively correlated with employee motivation employees who feel respected and included in the diversity policies report higher motivation (Abu, Nkpurukwe & Joda, reported in "Influence of Diversity and Inclusion on Organizational Performance of MTN Nigeria"). Moreover, the study "The Impact of Workplace Diversity and Training Programs On Employee Engagement in Nigeria" demonstrated that diversity coupled with inclusive training programmes are associated with a significant increase in employee engagement and motivation meaning that DEI cannot be used without capacity-building to ensure the maximum motivational benefit (Adeoye, Ojo and Adeshina, 2025).

   b) Employee Engagement: Engagement goes beyond motivation: it involves emotional, cognitive, and behavioural elements to the interactions of employees to their work and the organization. DEI efforts influence the engagement in the form of inclusive climates, psychological safety, and engagement. The study of workplace management initiatives in Nigerian pharmaceutical firms revealed that recognition, wellbeing support, learning and development, as well as diversity and inclusion, have significant influence on emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement dimensions among employees (Pharmaceutical Industry in Nigeria). Also, organisational justice (a component of equity) was found to influence both motivation and work engagement in Nigerian public ministries, with employee motivation mediating the effect of organisational justice on engagement (Oladimeji et al., 2021). These findings suggest that the more the DEI practices are based on fair processes (distributive, procedural, interactional justice), the more likely the employees to become equally engaged by their work.

   c) Work Commitment: Commitment in this context generally refers to an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization (affective commitment), as well as their desire to stay and contribute long term. Several Nigerian public sector studies point to DEI's contribution to work commitment through inclusion and fairness. For instance, a study on workplace diversity management among supervisory cadre in Abuja showed that inclusion and fairness as facets of diversity management had positive and significant impacts on employees' affective commitment, whereas equal opportunity and policies/programs were weaker or insignificant in some cases, possibly due to poor implementation or perception gaps (Ekejiuba, Adewale, Lamino & Sharma, 2023). Additionally, the civil service that job satisfaction mediates the link between talent engagement (affected by DEI policies) and commitment; engaged employees who are satisfied (partially through equitable and

inclusive practices) tend to be commitment-oriented (Abdulrahman Anas and Isichei, 2024).

However, the extent to which DEI initiatives affect motivation, engagement, and commitment depends on how well they are designed and implemented. Key mechanisms include:

i. Perceived Fairness and Justice: Equity in the recruitment, the promotion, reward and recognition indicate fairness. Employees feel motivated and become committed when they think systems are fair (Dada and Adebayo, 2005; Ekejiuba et al., 2023).

ii. Leadership Behaviour: Inclusive, transformational, and participatory leadership is likely to increase the positive impacts of DEI. Modelling fairness by leaders, involvement of employees in decision-making and overt support of inclusion contribute to trust and psychological safety, which in turn enhance engagement (public sector studies in Nigeria).

iii. Training, Recognition, and Support Systems: Diversity training, continuous recognition, welfare or wellbeing programs, and mentorship will assist employees to understand tangible organizational commitment, which will increase their engagement and commitment (Adeoye et al., 2025; Pharmaceutical companies study).

Even where DEI initiatives exist, several factors moderate their effectiveness:

- Poor implementation or tokenism: This is in a situation where the policies are not implemented, or the practices are implemented unevenly, the effect on motivation and commitment is compromised (Ekejiuba et al., 2023).
- Limited leadership buy-in: Leaders who do not internalise DEI values or who do not communicate them effectively reduce the credibility of DEI efforts.
- Cultural, organizational and societal contexts: Nigerians have an ethnic, religious, regional, and historical environment, and their cultural norms regarding patronage, favoritism or who you know can influence the perception of the DEI actions; what may seem fair to the management may still be seen as biased by the employees (Ekejiuba et al., 2023).

C. Equity-Based Policies and Fairness in Career Advancement in the Nigerian Public Sector

Equity-based policies in Nigeria's public sector are intended to correct structural imbalances and ensure all employees have fair access to career advancement, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, religion or region. hese policies include the Federal Character Principle, clear promotion standards, requirement of equal opportunity, and provisions that provide merit-based selection. The perceived equity and the actual efficacy of these policies in enabling equitable career progression, however, are debatable issues in both academic and policy analyses.

A major framework for equity in Nigeria is the Federal Character Principle (FCP), established to guarantee that appointments and promotions in the public service represent the country's diverse ethnic, religious and geopolitical composition (Ughulu and Omamor, 2020). While the FCP is legally binding through the Federal Character Commission, studies point out that its implementation often gets compromised by political interference and favoritism, undermining meritocracy (Ughulu and Omamor, 2020). As such, many employees perceive that career advancement does not always depend on ability or performance, but on connections, influence, or disadvantageous trust networks. This perception erodes morale and fuels distrust in the promotion system.

Empirical research sheds light on how equity-based policies or their gaps influence fairness in career advancement among specific groups. In a recent study in Abubakar Tatari Ali Polytechnic in Bauchi State, diversity management including fairness experience was examined as part of equity policies affecting women's career advancement. The findings revealed that age discrimination, gender inequality and religious discrimination negatively affect women's opportunities for promotion, even where equity policies formally exist (Tijjani, Yusuf & Musalli, 2024). Similarly, analyses of workforce diversity management reviews in the Nigerian public sector reveal that though equitable policies are often present on paper, their implementation is uneven appointments and promotions at senior levels are frequently skewed towards more powerful or well-connected individuals, marginalizing minorities (Ekejiuba, Adewale, Maitala & Nwoye, 2023).

Fairness in career advancement, thus, depends greatly not just on the existence of equity-based policies, but on the transparency, consistency and enforcement of those policies. Indicatively, in Gombe State tertiary institutions, research indicates that morale among workers increases significantly when there are fair promotion and study leave policies that are apparent to the employees, and which supports worker loyalty to the organization (Garba, Shinga & Dauda, 2025). On the other hand, insufficient transparency or visibility of decision-making in career development is likely to create a sense of injustice that destroys motivation, involvement, and organisational commitment.

The mismatch between formal policy frameworks and lived experiences is also evident in the literature on public regulatory agencies. Research also indicates that in regulatory institutions, equal opportunity, not to mention policies and programs designed to promote minority representation or reduce favoritism, are very poorly applied; and employees consider practices like nominations, top-level appointments or promotions to be often driven by non-merit reasons (Ekejiuba et al., 2023). These maladjustments cause the employees to question the fairness of the organization, and to diminish their discretionary effort or even seek employment elsewhere.

One key insight from the literature is that fairness in career advancement is multi-dimensional: procedural justice (fair and transparent processes), distributive justice (fair outcomes), and interactional justice (respect and dignity in how decisions are communicated and enacted) all matter. Such equity-related policies that only focus on a narrow dimension (e.g. the outcome) without focusing on decision-making processes, the parties involved, and information sharing are unlikely to work well in enhancing the perception of fairness or realistic career advancement (Tijjani et al., 2024; Ekejiuba et al., 2023).

In conclusion, while equity-based policies are necessary for fair career advancement in Nigeria's public sector, their effectiveness hinges upon consistent, transparent implementation and on organisational culture that values merit above patronage. The quest to reinforce policy implementation, demystify the promotion standards, afford equitable opportunities to training, promotion and mentoring, and reduce non-merit effects is essential in ensuring that equity policies foster actual equity in career advancement rather than serving only symbolic functions.

D. Inclusive Organizational Practices: Effects on Teamwork, Innovation, and Productivity

Inclusive organizational practices refer to formal and informal norms, policies, leadership behaviours, and systems designed to ensure that all employees feel valued, respected, and able to contribute fully, regardless of their background. These practices include participative decision-making, diversity acknowledgment, psychological safety, open line communication, and facilitation of cooperation between diverse groups. In the literature, the practices have been closely linked to improved teamwork, innovation and productivity within organisations such as the Nigerian public and private sector organisations.

a) Enhancing Teamwork: Teamwork thrives in environments where inclusive practices are embedded. Research done in the public sector of Nigeria has shown that there was an increase in performance of employees organized into teams and that those teams that are supported with inclusive policies. As an example, an analysis of public sector organisations revealed that the promotion of teamwork, the availability of open communication, and the opportunities of training and development resulted in more effective problem solving and better outcomes in a company (Kelvin-Iloafu, 2016). Similarly, participative management within the polytechnics in Ogun State indicated that staff engagement in the process of making decisions by various staff within the institution elevates the intention of staff to commit to the target of the team and results in increased levels of collaboration as a team member. Inclusive practices reinforce trust, reduce friction arising from misunderstandings, and facilitate coordination team members feel safer to express ideas, challenge assumptions, and share workload equitably.

b) Fostering Innovation: Innovation depends heavily on diversity of perspectives and the psychological safety to articulate and experiment with new ideas. Inclusive leadership that supports voice, values dissent, and ensures that minority group members are heard has been shown to increase innovative

work behaviours (not only globally, but also in Nigerian organisational studies). For instance, research on workplace diversity and inclusion in Nigeria (such as the case study of UBA, Ikeja) found that while diversity per se had positive effects, inclusion was the significant factor in driving productivity, which often involves innovation in processes, products or services. The public organizations managing workplace diversity and inclusion similarly report that inclusion stimulates innovation by creating environments where employees with varied backgrounds feel able to contribute novel ideas without fear of exclusion. Inclusive HR policy practices in faith-based secondary schools in Nigeria also demonstrate that institutions with formalised inclusive structures (transparent promotion, inclusive HR practices) achieve greater staff involvement in institutional change, generating new approaches to administrative problems and curriculum adjustments, thus enhancing innovation in practice.

c) Boosting Productivity: Productivity gains are among the most quantifiable outcomes of inclusive practices. Studies in Nigeria show that inclusive organizational cultures and diversity management are positively correlated with improved employee productivity. In the Federal Government parastatals in Bayelsa State, workforce diversity when well-managed (i.e. inclusive practices around collaboration, respect, mutual support) had a significant positive relationship with employee productivity. The MTN case study (diversity & inclusion) similarly asserts that inclusion enhances both motivation and productivity, partly by reducing conflict and increasing commitment. Furthermore, public sector research emphasises that governance practices which promote engagement of the "head, heart and hand" of employees i.e. intellectual, emotional and practical involvement tend to lead to better performance and productive output in public service delivery.

However, while the evidence is largely positive, the extent to which inclusive practices translate into teamwork, innovation, and productivity depends on several moderating conditions:

a) Leadership commitment and behaviour: The policies will never work without inclusive leadership in a real sense. It needs a leadership style that exhibits inclusive behaviour, encourages risk taking, and creates psychological safety.

b) Clarity, consistency, and enforcement: of shared practices (such as in the context of promotion, rewarding, or the composition of teams) are essential. In uneven practices or ad hoc practices, the employees can feel that they are not fairly treated, which destroys their trust, and therefore prevents teamwork or innovation. The research of Nigeria indicates the discrepancies between the official policies and the real experience of inclusion (e.g. regarding promotions or leadership representation) thereby lowering its efficacy.

c) Organizational culture: is significant: cultural norms, values, and existing power structures can either facilitate or impede inclusive practice. In high hierarchical or patronage societies, the inclusion initiatives might not succeed unless the culture changes.

d) Resources and training: inclusion often requires investment (such as training on unconscious bias, cross-cultural communication, facilitating employee resource groups) and infrastructure of the support resources that not all public sector organisations in Nigeria have.

In conclusion, the literature suggests that inclusive organizational practices substantially enhance teamwork, foster innovation, and improve productivity in Nigerian public and private sector settings. The facts indicate that as much as diversity offers the potential, it is also inclusion via equitable policies, participative leadership, open communication and psychological safety that realises the benefits. The degree of influence however differs based on the intensity of leadership, practice and alignment of the organizational culture. To reformists and policymakers in the Nigerian public sector, they should focus on the inclusion practices to lead to significant changes in service delivery and institutional performance.

E. Barriers to Effective DEI Implementation and Strategies for Improving Inclusivity in the Nigerian Public Service

Implementing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives in Nigeria's public sector faces several entrenched barriers. Recognizing these obstacles is essential to crafting feasible interventions that can improve inclusivity and thereby enhance workforce performance. They include:

i.   Political Interference and Patronage: One of the persistent barriers is political influence in recruitment, promotion and other human resource decisions. Positions are sometimes awarded based on loyalty, regional or ethnic considerations, rather than merit. This undermines trust in human resource systems and diminishes the legitimacy of DEI policies (The Nigerian public sector training and recruitment process, 2021)

ii.   Nepotism, Favouritism and Bias: Related to political interference are informal practices such as nepotism, favouritism and favouritism with regard to ethnicity or religion which alters equitable policy. Formal DEI or equitable policies do not always work uniformly even in the case of their existence, and influential individuals or groups can bypass the rules (Managing-Workplace-Diversity-and-Inclusion in Public Organization, 2024).

iii.   Ethnic, Tribal or Identity Conflicts: In Nigeria's multi ethnically focused Nigerian society can be influenced by historical resentment, identity politics, or inter-group antipathy. They may decrease cohesion, trust, and cooperation in case inclusion or equity policies are seen as favouring one group of people over the other (Managing-Workplace-Diversity-and-Inclusion in Public Organization, 2024).

iv.   Lack of Leadership Commitment and Accountability: DEI needs the dedication of the top leadership. DEI policies are likely to be merely symbolic or superficial without visible, true commitment and responsibility in the form of policies, performance targets, monitoring and sanctions (Leveraging on Diversity in Nigeria Workforce: Inclusion and Equality Strategies, 2022).

v.   Resource Constraints: Many public organisations lack financial, human, and technical resources to implement DEI initiatives: training programs, monitoring systems, or data collection on diversity metrics can be feeble or absent (Omaplex Law Firm, Challenges in DEI in Nigerian Education System); as well as with scarce institutional support (Managing-Workplace-Diversity-and-Inclusion in Public Organization, 2024).

vi.   Lack of Policy Clarity, Legal or Regulatory Frameworks: Sometimes policies are unclear, old-fashioned, or not properly implemented. The DEI standards are unequally enforced and employees are also unaware of their rights and would not know what to expect without explicit legal support or regulatory requirements (Omaplex Law Firm, etc.).

vii.   Cultural Resistance and Unconscious Bias: Norms, values and beliefs in organisations and the society as a whole may be against change. Workers and executives might have prejudices that are unaware, prefer in-group membership, or oppose the inclusion initiative due to the perceived threat to prevailing levels of authority (Leveraging on Diversity..., 2022).

viii.   Bureaucratic Red Tape and Inefficient Institutional Processes: The complex layers of bureaucracy, delays, opaque processes, and administrative inefficiencies impede swift implementation of DEI measures. Even in case of policy with slowness of procedures, transparency of promotion criteria, and poor oversight (Managing-Workplace-Diversity-and-Inclusion in Public Organization, 2024).

In conclusion, while there are many systemic, cultural, political and resource-based barriers to effective DEI implementation in the Nigerian public service, there also exist clear, evidence-based strategies to mitigate them. To transition DEI, the leadership commitment must be sustained, systems that are transparent and based on merit, resources must be sufficient, there must be legal/policy clarity, and culture change must occur. A combination of these steps will result in more inclusive public institutions that would subsequently lead to an increased employee motivation, trust, fairness, and performance.

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the Social Identity Theory (SIT) developed by Tajfel and Turner (1986), complemented by elements of Equity Theory (Adams, 1963). These theories jointly explain how perceptions of group identity, fairness, and inclusion shape employee motivation, behaviour, and performance in organisational settings.

The Social Identity Theory (SIT) was propounded by Tajfel and Turner in 1986. According to the theory, people get a substantial portion of their self-concept by being a member of social groups. These groups can be based on gender, ethnicity, profession, religion, or affiliation to an organisation. Tajfel and Turner (1986) argue

that people want to have a positive social identity by comparing their in-group (group to which they belong) with the necessary out-groups. By engaging in inclusion and embracing diversity, an organisation is confirming the identity of various groups, which results in organisational attachment, engagement, and commitment (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).
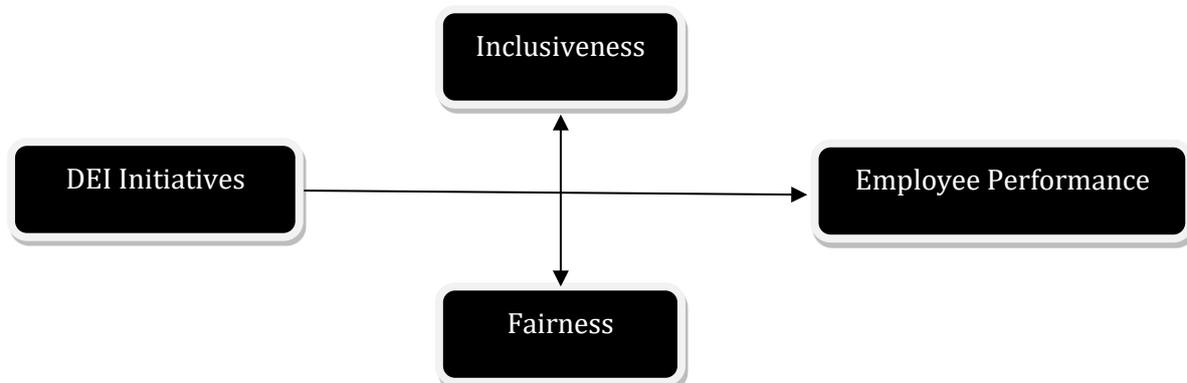
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Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Within the context of Nigeria's public sector, SIT explains how employees from diverse ethnic, religious, and gender backgrounds interact and identify with the organisation. Intergroup bias and social exclusion are minimized by adoption of inclusive workplace practices that include fair hiring, equal opportunity procedures, and participation in decision-making (Shore et al., 2011).

As workers feel that their social identity has or is respected and valued, they are more likely to build greater trust, motivation, and output (Nishii, 2013). On the other hand, in the absence of the DEI practices, marginalised group employees can feel out of place, which reduces their morale and productivity (Daya, 2014).Thus, SIT provides a behavioural and psychological lens to understand how DEI initiatives improve employee engagement, collaboration, and innovation. In public organisations where ethnic and gender disparities are prevalent, DEI programmes help to bridge divides, foster unity, and promote collective organisational goals (Booysen, 2014).

In the same vein, while SIT focuses on identity and belonging, Equity Theory propounded by Adams in 1963 deals with fairness and justice in workplace relationships. Adams (1963) is of the view that employees understand fairness as a ratio between their contributions (inputs in terms of effort, ability, experience) and performance (rewards, recognition, promotion). When the employees feel that there is fairness, they will tend to be motivated and committed, but when inequalities, dissatisfaction and disengagement will arise (Greenberg, 1990).

In the context of DEI, the equity-related measures (e.g. clear promotion policies, equal remuneration, etc.) are necessary to uphold motivation and trust. According to Patrick and Kumar (2012), procedural and distributive justice affects the quantity and quality of performance by employees through their own perceptions of procedural and distributive justice. Equally, Olujide (2021) discovered that equity in career progression in the public organisations in Nigeria promotes morale and lowers turnover intentions significantly.

Combining Equity Theory with SIT strengthens this study's analytical base: SIT demonstrates the importance of the identity and inclusion in employee engagement, Equity Theory explains how fairness and justice contribute to the work outcomes and motivation. Collectively, these frameworks highlight the importance of high-quality DEI implementation to improve both the psychological and relational aspects of the performance at the workplace.

Applying the theories to this study, the Social Identity Theory explains how DEI initiatives (such as inclusive hiring and representation) influence employee motivation, engagement, and collaboration of employees through a stronger sense of belonging and organisational identification. In the meantime, the Equity Theory is used to define the influence of fair treatment, equal opportunities, and transparent career advancement on performance, satisfaction, and productivity.

In Nigeria's public sector, where ethnic, regional, and gender disparities often shape administrative outcomes, these theories provide valuable insight into how DEI policies can turn the public institutions into the work environments characterized by fairness and performance (Ogunyemi and Olamide, 2022). Collectively, they offer a twofold outlook on the way and explanation of why DEI programs promote performance within the Nigerian public sector by connecting the identity and fairness with motivation. The integrated framework therefore posits that DEI initiatives influence employee performance through two key mediating constructs - perceived inclusion (SIT) and perceived fairness (Equity Theory).

V. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which is suitable for assessing existing conditions, opinions, and relationships among variables within a population (Creswell, 2014). The choice of this design was guided by the need to obtain first-hand, empirical data on how DEI initiatives influence employee performance in selected Nigerian public sector organisations.

The descriptive design allows for the quantification of employees' perceptions of DEI practices and their implications on motivation, engagement, fairness, and productivity (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). The research focuses on capturing employees' lived experiences and organisational realities within ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) where diversity, equity, and inclusion policies are being implemented.

Hence, the approach combines both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (interview) elements to ensure comprehensive data coverage and triangulation of findings (Kothari, 2014). The target population of the study comprised employees in selected federal and state public sector organisations across Nigeria, including ministries such as the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Federal Civil Service Commission, and selected State Civil Service Commissions.

These organisations were chosen because they represent the formal administrative structure where DEI policies are most visible. The total population was estimated at approximately 1,500 employees, spanning senior, middle, and junior cadres. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), the population should be broad enough to allow representativeness and generalisation of findings. The inclusion of both managerial and non-managerial staff was aimed at capturing multiple perspectives on how DEI initiatives influence employee performance outcomes.

Additionally, the study selected a sample size of 400 respondents, determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula for finite populations at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. The stratified random sampling has been used to facilitate the fair representation of the population in terms of gender, department, and job level because the DEI dynamics usually differ depending on these factors. Within each stratum, simple random sampling was used to select participants, thereby minimising bias and enhancing the validity of findings (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Both primary and secondary data sources were used.

The administration of structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used as a source of gathering primary data. The questionnaire was split into close-ended questions rated on a five-point Likert scale (aone that ranged along the lines of Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree), and the items covered indicators of DEI practices (diversity management, fairness, inclusion, and equity policies) and the dimensions of employee performance (motivation, engagement, teamwork, innovation, and productivity). The secondary data were collected by means of organisational reports, policy documents, government circulars and past empirical researches concerning the topic of DEI in the federal public sector of Nigeria (Ekejiuba et al., 2023; Tijjani, Yusuf and Musalli, 2024).

The questionnaire was adapted from existing, validated DEI and performance measurement scales used in prior studies (Cox & Blake, 1991; Shore et al., 2011). In order to achieve content validity, the experts in the field of human resource management and public administration reviewed the instrument. In a non-sampled ministry, a pilot test was carried out on 30 respondents to test their reliability and the Cronbachs Alpha coefficient was

0.83, which was high in terms of internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978). Lastly, descriptive and inferential statistics were used in analyzing the data collected.

The demographic data (mean, frequency and percentages distribution) and the perceptions of DEI practices of respondents were summarised using descriptive analysis. Chi-square tests and Pearson correlation were used as the tools of inferential analysis to determine the relationships between DEI initiatives and performance indicators like motivation, engagement, and productivity among employees (Field, 2013). The quantitative findings were supported by the qualitative information gathered through interviews analysed using thematic analysis in order to find the common themes and contextualization's (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Findings from both methods were triangulated to improve the validity and robustness of conclusions.

A. Ethical Considerations
Ethical approval was obtained from the research ethics committee of the host institution. The participants were told the aim of the study, their confidentiality was guaranteed, and their participation was voluntary. The data collection required informed consent, and the information was anonymised to ensure the identity of the participants was not disclosed, which is in line with the standards of research ethics (Resnik, 2018).

VI. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION
A. Descriptive statistical Analysis of Research Questions
The tables show frequency (F), percentage (%), and mean scores (x̄) using a 5-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA = 5), Agree (A = 4), Undecided (U = 3), Disagree (D = 2), Strongly Disagree (SD = 1).

Table 1. Influence of DEI Initiatives on Employee Performance

Response Option	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree (5)	108	27.0
Agree (4)	140	35.0
Undecided (3)	84	21.0
Disagree (2)	48	12.0
Strongly Disagree (1)	20	5.0
Total	**400**	**100**
Mean (x̄)	**3.21**	**Moderate Influence**

Source: Field Report, 2026

Table 1 above shows that 62% of respondents agreed that DEI initiatives influence employee performance. The mean of 3.21 indicates a moderate positive impact on productivity and efficiency among public sector employees.

Table 2. Effect of DEI Practices on Employee Motivation, Engagement, and Commitment

Response Option	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree (5)	124	31.0
Agree (4)	136	34.0
Undecided (3)	80	20.0
Disagree (2)	40	10.0
Strongly Disagree (1)	20	5.0
Total	**400**	**100**
Mean (x̄)	**3.47**	**Moderate–High Influence**

Source: Field Report, 2026

The above table shows that about 65% of employees agreed that DEI enhances motivation and commitment. The mean of 3.47 suggests that inclusive environments improve engagement and job dedication.

Table 3. Relationship between Equitable Treatment and Fairness in Career Advancement

Response Option	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree (5)	152	38.0
Agree (4)	128	32.0
Undecided (3)	72	18.0
Disagree (2)	32	8.0
Strongly Disagree (1)	16	4.0
Total	**400**	**100**
Mean (x̄)	**3.52**	**High Influence**

Source: Field Report, 2026

Table 3 above shows that 70% of respondents agreed that equitable treatment promotes fairness in career advancement. The mean value of 3.52 indicates a strong positive relationship between equity and fairness in promotion.

Table 4. Influence of Inclusive Workplace Cultures on Teamwork, Innovation, and Productivity

Response Option	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree (5)	136	34.0
Agree (4)	136	34.0
Undecided (3)	60	15.0
Disagree (2)	48	12.0
Strongly Disagree (1)	20	5.0
Total	**400**	**100**
Mean (x̄)	**3.44**	**Moderate–High Influence**

Source: Field Report, 2026

Table 4 above shows that 68% of respondents affirmed that inclusivity enhances teamwork and creativity. The mean score of 3.44 shows that inclusive culture significantly boost productivity and cooperation.

Table 5. Barriers to Effective DEI Implementation in Nigerian Public Sector Organizations

Response Option	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree (5)	80	20.0
Agree (4)	148	37.0
Undecided (3)	84	21.0
Disagree (2)	60	15.0
Strongly Disagree (1)	28	7.0
Total	**400**	**100**
Mean (x̄)	**2.92**	**Moderate Challenges**

Source: Field Report, 2026

Table 5 above shows that 57% of respondents indicated that weak leadership commitment and political interference hinder DEI. The mean of 2.92 suggests that implementation challenges are moderately high

Table 6. Overall Summary of Descriptive Statistics

Research Question	Variable Measured	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Interpretation
1	DEI impact on employee performance	3.21	Moderate influence
2	DEI effect on motivation and engagement	3.47	Moderate–high influence
3	Equity and fairness in career advancement	3.52	High influence
4	Inclusion and teamwork/innovation	3.44	Moderate–high influence
5	Barriers to DEI implementation	2.92	Moderate challenges

The overall descriptive analysis indicates that DEI initiatives influence the attitudes of employees, their performance, and organisational outcomes in a positive direction on average, as most variables have mean scores higher than 3.0. Institutional and leadership issues, which do not present significant obstacles to DEI success, are reflected in the relatively lower score of barriers (2.92). These results are consistent with other studies (Roberson, 2019; Ogunyemi and Olamide, 2022), which prove that the effectiveness of DEI in the sphere of the Nigerian state is conditional upon long-term managerial efforts, clear HR practices, and organizational willingness to diversity.

B. Inferential Statistical Analysis of Hypotheses

This section presents the results of inferential statistical analyses carried out using the Chi-square test of independence and the Pearson correlation coefficient to test the relationship between DEI initiatives and various employee outcomes. The analysis was based on responses from 400 employees across selected Nigerian public sector organizations. The level of significance was set at 0.05 (5%).

a. Hypothesis One

- H_{01}: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives do not significantly influence overall employee performance in selected Nigerian public sector organizations.
- H_{11}: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives significantly influence overall employee performance.

Table 7. Chi-Square and Pearson Correlation Analysis of the Relationship Between DEI Initiatives and Employee Performance

Variable	χ^2 (Chi-square)	df	p-value	Decision	Pearson r	Interpretation
DEI Initiatives × Employee Performance	21.68	4	0.001	Reject H_0	0.421**	Moderate positive correlation

Source: Field Report, 2026

The Chi-square result (χ^2 = 21.68, p < 0.05) shows a statistically significant relationship between DEI initiatives and employee performance. The Pearson correlation (r = 0.421) indicates a moderate positive relationship, suggesting that better implementation of DEI policies improves employee efficiency, cooperation, and task performance. This supports prior findings by Roberson (2019) and Cox and Blake (1991), which established that inclusive workplace systems lead to improved productivity and engagement.

b. Hypothesis Two

- H_{02}: DEI practices do not significantly affect employee motivation, engagement, and work commitment within Nigeria's public institutions.
- H_{12}: DEI practices significantly affect employee motivation, engagement, and work commitment.

Table 8. Chi-Square and Pearson Correlation Analysis of the Relationship Between DEI Practices and Employee Motivation, Engagement, and Work Commitment

Variable	χ^2 (Chi-square)	df	p-value	Decision	Pearson r	Interpretation
DEI Practices × Motivation and Commitment	28.53	4	0.000	Reject H_0	0.537**	Strong positive correlation

Source: Field Report, 2026

The Chi-square test shows χ^2 = 28.53 (p < 0.05), indicating a significant relationship between DEI practices and motivation. The Pearson correlation (r = 0.537) indicates that there is a strong positive correlation between inclusiveness and fairness perceptions and motivation and commitment to work by the employees. The outcome is consistent with that of Shore et al. (2011) and Nishii (2013) who concluded that inclusive climates promote the sense of psychological security and enhance engagement.

c. Hypothesis Three
- H_{03}: There is no significant relationship between equitable treatment and fairness in career advancement among employees in selected public sector organizations.
- H_{13}: There is a significant relationship between equitable treatment and fairness in career advancement.

Table 9. Chi-Square and Pearson Correlation Analysis of the Relationship Between Equity-Based Policies and Fairness in Career Advancement

Variable	χ^2 (Chi-square)	df	p-value	Decision	Pearson r	Interpretation
Equity × Career Fairness	31.27	4	0.000	Reject H_0	0.563**	Strong positive correlation

Source: Field Report, 2026

The Chi-square value (χ^2 = 31.27, p < 0.05) confirms a statistically significant relationship between equity-based policies and fairness in promotion. The Pearson correlation (r = 0.563) shows that there is high positive relationship, i.e., equitable treatment leads to transparency and trust when it comes to career advancement process. The present result concurs with Tijjani, Yusuf, and Musalli (2024), who believed perceived justice and employee morale in the public sector of Nigeria depends on fairness in HR decisions.

d. Hypothesis Four
- H_{04}: Inclusive workplace cultures do not significantly enhance teamwork, innovation, and productivity among public sector employees.
- H_{14}: Inclusive workplace cultures significantly enhance teamwork, innovation, and productivity.

Table 10. Chi-Square and Pearson Correlation Analysis of the Relationship Between Inclusive Workplace Culture and Teamwork, Innovation, and Productivity

Variable	χ^2 (Chi-square)	df	p-value	Decision	Pearson r	Interpretation
Inclusion × Teamwork/Innovation	25.91	4	0.002	Reject H_0	0.496**	Moderate–strong positive correlation

Source: Field Report, 2026

The Chi-square value (χ^2 = 25.91, p < 0.05) and Pearson correlation (r = 0.496) suggest a moderate-to-strong positive correlation between inclusion and teamwork outcomes. This implies that when public institutions promote inclusivity, collaboration and creativity improve substantially. This aligns with Cox and Blake (1991) and Adetunji (2020), who noted that inclusive environments encourage diverse perspectives that lead to innovative performance outcomes.

e. Hypothesis Five
- H_{05}: There is no significant relationship between implementation challenges and the effectiveness of DEI

initiatives in Nigerian public sector organizations.

- H_{15}: There is a significant relationship between implementation challenges and the effectiveness of DEI initiatives.

Table 11. Chi-Square and Pearson Correlation Analysis of the Relationship Between DEI Implementation Challenges and DEI Effectiveness

Variable	χ^2 (Chi-square)	df	p-value	Decision	Pearson r	Interpretation
DEI Challenges × DEI Effectiveness	19.73	4	0.012	Reject H_0	-0.389*	Negative moderate correlation

Source: Field Report, 2026

The Chi-square test (χ^2 = 19.73, p < 0.05) shows a significant relationship between DEI challenges and implementation success. The negative Pearson correlation (r = -0.389) indicates that as challenges such as weak leadership, limited funding, and political interference increase, DEI effectiveness declines. This supports Ogunyemi and Olamide (2022), who found that institutional barriers often undermine the sustainability of diversity programmes in Nigerian bureaucracies.

Table 12. Summary of Inferential Results

Hypothesis	Statistical Test	χ^2	p-value	Pearson r	Decision	Interpretation
H_1	Chi-square, Correlation	21.68	0.001	0.421	Reject H_0	Moderate positive relationship
H_2	Chi-square, Correlation	28.53	0.000	0.537	Reject H_0	Strong positive relationship
H_3	Chi-square, Correlation	31.27	0.000	0.563	Reject H_0	Strong positive relationship
H_4	Chi-square, Correlation	25.91	0.002	0.496	Reject H_0	Moderate–strong relationship
H_5	Chi-square, Correlation	19.73	0.012	-0.389	Reject H_0	Negative moderate relationship

The inferential results indicate that all five null hypotheses were rejected, showing that DEI initiatives are statistically significantly related to the performance of employees, their motivation, fairness, teamwork, and the general organisational performance. However, the negative correlation observed in Hypothesis Five evidences that implementation obstacles including low levels of leadership commitment and insufficient organizational support play a large role in mitigating DEI performance. In general, the literature confirms the main hypothesis that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs have a beneficial effect on the performance of employees and organisations when implemented in a systematic way, in line with the findings of other researchers in the field as well as in Nigeria (Roberson, 2019; Shore et al., 2011; Ogunyemi and Olamide, 2022).

VII. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study examined the impact of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs affect the performance of employees in the chosen organisations within the Nigerian public sector. It examined the impact of DEI practices on motivation, engagement, fairness, teamwork, innovation, and productivity and obstacles restricting successful application. Data were collected from 400 respondents using a descriptive survey design, and both descriptive and inferential statistical tools (means, frequencies, Chi-square tests, and Pearson correlations) were employed for analysis.

The findings revealed that DEI initiatives have a significant and positive influence on employee and organisational outcomes. The first hypothesis showed a moderate positive relationship between DEI initiatives and employee performance (r = 0.421), implying that inclusive and equitable management systems enhance employee efficiency and output (Cox & Blake, 1991; Roberson, 2019). The second hypothesis revealed positive relationship (r = 0.537) between DEI practices and employee motivation, engagement, and commitment which

means inclusiveness intensifies emotional attachment as well as commitment towards organisational objectives (Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2011).

Similarly, the third hypothesis revealed a strong positive relationship (r = 0.563) between equity-based policies and fairness in career advancement. his indicates that open and fair treatment breed trust and minimizes the feelings of biasness and discrimination (Tijjani, Yusuf & Musalli, 2024). The fourth hypothesis implied that teamwork, innovation, and productivity were positively affected by the practice of inclusion (r = 0.496), which represented previous studies finding that diversity of thought is a trigger of creativity and group problem-solving (Adetunji, 2020; Cox & Blake, 1991). The fifth hypothesis, in turn, revealed the negative moderate correlation (r = -0.389) between the implementation difficulties and the DEI effectiveness, which suggests that weak institutional commitment, the absence of enforcement, and socio-political biases significantly hinder success (Ogunyemi & Olamide, 2022).

Overall, the study's findings affirm that DEI initiatives are crucial instruments to enhance the motivation, performance, and innovation of employees in the field of public service in Nigeria. These results support the arguments of both the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and turner, 1986) and the Equity Theory (Adams, 1963) which propose that the stronger the organisational commitment and performance occur in the inclusive environment and the perceived fairness. Nonetheless, they cannot be effective unless leadership commitment is maintained and institutional frameworks carry out the leadership roles.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This research concludes that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs are highly critical in determining organisational performance and employee performance in the Nigerian government. The research proves that when diversity and fairness are adopted in workplaces, motivation, creativeness, and productivity are enhanced.

When properly enforced, then DEI policies provide an atmosphere in which every employee irrespective of gender, ethnicity, and social status feel valued and empowered enough to make a significant contribution to the purpose of the institution (Shore et al., 2011; Roberson, 2019). However, the paper has also discovered that most of the public organisations in Nigeria continue to grapple with ineffective policy execution, lack of awareness, and enough resources to support DEI efforts. There is no national DEI framework, and the bureaucratic rigidity still contributes to hindering inclusiveness. Therefore, to enhance the effectiveness of DEI, it is necessary to reflect a conscious change between policy rhetoric and institutional practical measures with the help of leadership, monitoring, and legal enforcement mechanisms.

In essence, DEI is not only a moral or ethical obligation but a strategic imperative efficiency, innovation as well as sustainable development in the public administration in Nigeria. The institutionalisation of the principles of DEI will thus serve as a step in the right direction towards the inclusion in governance and enhance the human capital base needed for national transformation.

A. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Institutionalisation of DEI Policies: The policies on recruitment, training, and promotion of Federal Civil Services and State Civil Services Commissions should incorporate the concept of DEI. This would ensure that all employees enjoy equal access to opportunities regardless of demographic differences (Adetunji, 2020).

2. Leadership Commitment and Accountability: Every tier of the public service should be led by leaders who will spearhead the DEI implementation process using performance metrics, frequent reporting and systems to reward compliance. Senior management must model inclusive behaviour to promote cultural change (Shore et al., 2011).

3. Capacity Building and Sensitisation: Continuous training and awareness programmes should be organised to educate employees on the value of diversity, inclusion, and fairness. This will reduce resistance to change and foster mutual respect and cooperation (Roberson, 2019).

4. Strengthening Legal and Policy Frameworks: The Federal Government must implement a Public Sector

DEI Policy Framework that will provide direction to all ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs). Such laws must have monitoring and assessment tools to ensure adherence and effectiveness (Ogunyemi & Olamide, 2022).

5. Addressing Implementation Barriers: Bureaucratic bottlenecks, budgetary allocations, and political interference should be addressed to make sure that the DEI programmes operate efficiently. To improve the efficiency of implementation, it would be appropriate to have transparency mechanisms, stakeholder participation, and accountability audits.

6. Promoting Inclusive Leadership and Innovation: Managers ought to adopt the concepts of inclusive leadership, in which employees with different backgrounds cooperate and innovate. This will create innovation and joint ownership of organisational vision (Cox & Blake, 1991).

7. Research and Continuous Assessment: Future studies should expand this research to other sectors and use longitudinal data to assess the long-term impacts of DEI initiatives on performance and service delivery.

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