

**EFFECT OF INTERNAL DIMENSION OF EMPLOYEE DIVERSITY ON  
PERFORMANCE OF ACADEMIC STAFF IN SELECTED PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN  
KENYA**

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**Abstract**

The objective of this study was to determine the effect of internal dimension on performance of academic staff in selected public universities in Kenya. The study was anchored on role theory. Descriptive cross sectional research design was used to obtain data concerning the current status of internal dimension and performance of academic staff variables. The target population constituted 7143 academic staff from six purposefully selected public universities which included; University of Nairobi, Moi university, Kenyatta university, Egerton university, Jomo Kenyatta university of Agriculture and Technology and Maseno university. A sample size of 379 academic staff was randomly selected using proportionate random and systematic sampling. A semi-structured questionnaire in Survey Monkey format was used to collect data. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used. The study hypotheses were tested at 95% confidence level. The results indicate that internal dimension had no significant effect on performance of academic staff. The study suggests that future research should focus on broadening internal dimension study to other dimensions that constitute workforce diversity. More research should also be undertaken in other industries for further generalization of findings to broad sectors.

**Keywords.**

Internal dimension, primary dimension, workforce diversity, employee diversity, employee performance

**1.1 Introduction**

The past reality of homogeneous academic staff is rapidly phasing out (Austin, 2003). Universities are heterogeneous than ever before. In order to solve everyday complex tasks in higher education, team work is important (Lauring, Johansson & Selmer 2013). Heterogeneity resulting from diversification and internationalization in higher institutions of learning (HIL) may challenge cooperation and increase communication challenges (Keller, 2001). Accordingly, the increased diversification of higher education staff puts additional pressure on group functioning among academic staff (Young & Brooks, 2008).

Kenyan public universities academic standards are deteriorating and arguably inefficient (Mwangi, 2016). To support this Munene (2014) study indicates that universities are operating on low budgets and staff turnover rates are higher than ever before. Additionally, most African higher learning Institutions (HIL) research agendas are not well articulated and their research capacity are generally weak UNESCO (2010) consequently, publishing rates among academic staff in Kenyan public universities are very low (Mweru, 2010). Moreover, over-dependence on external funding has hindered creativity fostering a reactive culture rather than a proactive culture (Mwangi, 2016).

**1.1.1 Employee Performance**

Organizations eager to work with a diverse workforce pursue internal management and human resource (HR) practices that promote and take advantage of the potency and benefits of workforce diversity. This is done through accounting for performance related aspects of diversity, Ashikali and Groeneveld, (2015) and making use of the knowledge, skills and abilities of a diverse workforce. In addition, organizations also conscientiously recruit and strive to retain a diverse workforce, implement anti discriminatory policies and practices and undertake diversity management training to reduce the interpersonal tensions and conflicts that often crop up as a result of increased workforce diversity (Edmund, Randall & Liang, 2012).

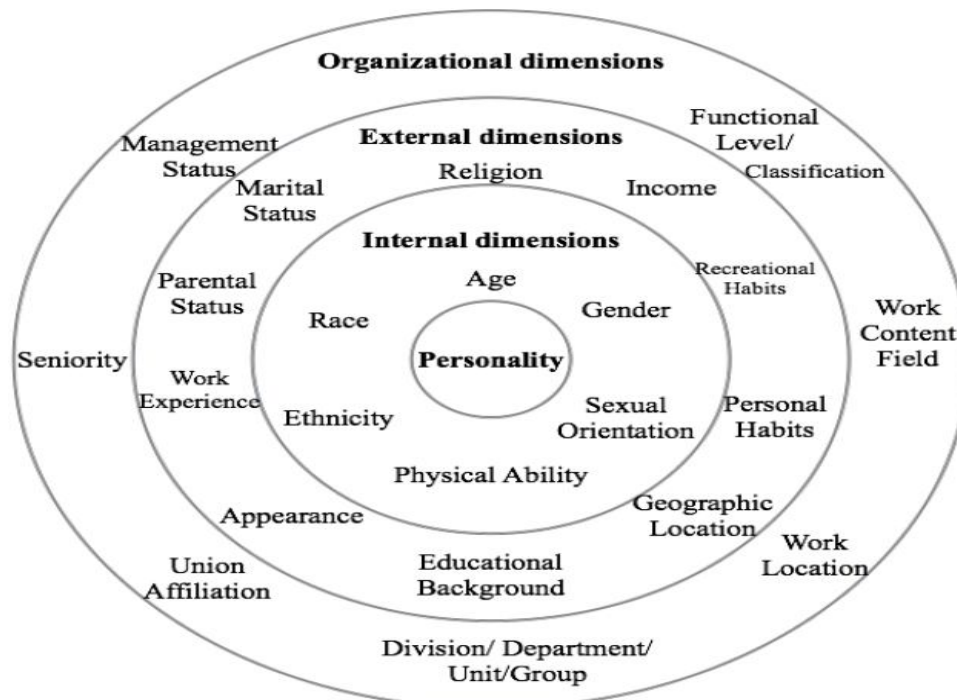
Increased demands on government and private funding, a deteriorating physical infrastructure, increased pressure on undergraduate programs, university expansion strategies and general

economic climate in the country have raised concerns about the continued capacity of universities to maintain teaching, research productivity and service to the community (Migosi, Muola & Maithya, 2012). The measurement of performance of academic staff in the universities world over is based on the efficiency and effectiveness in teaching, research and community service.

In Kenya, poor performance of the public sector in the management of public resources led to the introduction of performance contracting in public service in the financial year 2005/2006. A performance contract is a written agreement between the government and a state agency delivering services to the public wherein quantifiable targets are explicitly specified and performance measured against agreed targets (Wambua, 2014). Kenya introduced performance contracting not only to improve service delivery but also to refocus the mind set of public service away from an inward looking culture to a business focused culture (Wambua, 2014). It is postulated that performance can be measured and shortfalls identified, in order for appropriate actions to be undertaken to improve performance (Jones & Thompson, 2007). Several performance measures have been developed by various industries. This study adopted the performance contracting measures for university academic staff that include teaching, research and innovation, community service and administrative work as outlined in their performance contracts.

**1.1.2 Internal Dimensions of Diversity**

Gardenswartz and Rowe (2008) grouped workforce diversity into four dimensions; personality, internal, external and organizational dimension as indicated in Figure 1.1.



**Figure 1.1: Diversity Wheel**

Source: Gardenswartz & Rowe (2008).

As presented in Figure 1.1, internal dimension also known as primary dimension include; age, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, ethnicity and race.

According to Reece and Brandot (1999), internal dimension includes employee differences that cannot be changed for instance race, age, gender, mental abilities and/or sexual orientation. Muhammad, Metz and Kulik (2015); Choi (2016) in their studies found there were higher turnover intentions with increase in age, ethnicity and race diversity ultimately leading to increased costs and lower individual employee performance.

### **1.1.3 Public Universities in Kenya**

There are thirty chartered public universities in Kenya appendix ii, (CUE, 2017). A public university is a university established, assisted, maintained and run using public funds (CUE, 2017). It is important to point out the rapid growth in universities in Kenya between the years 2010-2015, where numbers of public universities in Kenya significantly increased. There were eight public universities in Kenya by the year 2012. In 2013 an additional fourteen universities were chartered to full public university status (The 2015/16 Kenya integrated household budget survey, 2018). By 2017, there were 30 public universities (CUE, 2017). During this period, the students numbers sky rocketed to 443,783, with Kenyatta University having the highest number of students at approximately 76,000 students in the different modes of study that is Full time, Part time, Institutional based and Distant learning modes.

Due to gender mainstreaming, there are more women joining university academia unlike before where top leadership positions were mainly dominated by men. The last over one decade (2000-2017), saw a significant rise in the number of female vice chancellors and deputy vice chancellors in Kenyan universities (CUE, 2017). The Kenyan government also increased its allocation to university level education. The recurrent expenditure from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to University education had risen from eighteen million in 2010/2011 to fifty eight million in 2014/15 (The 2015/16 Kenya integrated household budget survey, 2018).

## **1.2 Theoretical Literature Review**

### **1.2.1 Role Theory**

Role theory was developed by Ralph Linton (1936). The theory defined role as the dynamic aspect of status, contending that every status in society has an attached role and that every role is attached to a status. Role theory is mainly concerned with behavioral patterns common to social groups and the underlying cognitive and affective reasons which trigger these patterns (Beezer, 1974). The theory proposes that the behaviour of individuals is influenced by other people's expectations of them and how they are supposed to behave in a given situation. This includes both regular normal ways of acting and also the accepted mannerisms towards each another (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

Role expectations are external to the persons under scrutiny; they are institutional demands an individual is supposed to deal with as the occupant of a given legitimate position. These demands are found in the official directives, traditions and organizational ideologies and can be implicit or explicit and aid in determining a firms purpose and interactions guide. These demands outline the types of role behavior expected from an employee as an occupant of a particular position (Beezer, 1974).

Therefore this theory supports this study in that performance of individual employee is affected by the perceptions and expectations of other individuals towards them. If an individual belongs to a certain group in this case age group, sex group, ethnic group or education group then the employee strives to meet the expected performance measures ascribed to that group.

### 1.3 Empirical Literature Review

Employee Diversity refers to human characteristics making employees different (Mkono, 2010). Gardenswartz and Rowe (2008) in their study indicate that internal dimension diversity are those differences that employees have little or no control over. Most of the internal dimension are surface level differences, these are employee differences that are visible or noticeable easily (Lauring & Selmer, 2013). According to Lumby *et al.*, (2007); Kinicki (2008); Kinyanjui (2013), internal dimension apply a powerful influence on individual uniqueness and directly affect a person's relationships with other individuals and groups in organizations. For the purpose of this study they were age, physical ability, gender and ethnicity.

Age diversity indicates the presence of a wide representation of different age groups in an organization. It is depicted as surface-level diversity and therefore is a less task-related type of diversity (Lauring & Selmer, 2013). In Kenya the general retirement age for civil servants is 60 years up from 55 years in the years prior 2009 leading to increased age diversity in the workplace. Moreover, in public universities the retirement age is higher at 70 years. The youngest employee could be as young as 24 years (CUE, 2017) in the position of graduate assistant working alongside professors who are much older.

There are different findings on age in relation to performance, Lauring and Selmer (2013); Pelled (1996) empirical studies suggest that age group diversity is less related to a group tasks and therefore less relevant to group functioning and work. However, observable differences, such as age, are associated with negative outcomes in group functioning, stereotypes and prejudice, consequently hindering teamwork and communication (Milliken & Martins, 1996).

Darwin and Selvaraj (2015) analysis of the effects of work force diversity on employee performance in Singapore organizations revealed that age, gender and ethnicity do not have a statistically significant impact on the performance of employees. In addition, research by Ogaga and Ehimare (2011) on the impact of workforce diversity on organizational effectiveness in a Nigerian bank using the Blau's index of heterogeneity and hierarchical regression analysis, found that gender and ethnicity are negatively related to both employee performance and productivity. Rørstad and Aksnes (2015) in their study on publication rate expressed by age, gender and academic position on 12,400 Norwegian university lecturers, found that age, ethnicity and academic position only contributed 13.5-19% of the variance in individuals publication output. In addition they also concluded that academic position is more important than age and gender in relation to academic publication rate.

A study by Thomas and Feldman (2008) on the relationship of age to ten dimension of job performance, found out that age was principally unrelated to core task performance, creativity and performance. Dawin (2014) too in a study of employees working in service and manufacturing sectors in Singapore, using convenience sampling technique found that there is no significant relationship between age diversity and employee performance. Armstrong (2014) point out that age is a poor predictor of job performance. It is deceptive to associate physical and mental capability with an individual's age. In addition, a large proportion of the population today is active and living healthier even with advanced age. Furthermore, research on older employees does not support most of the stereotypes since, past studies show that as ones age increases so does job satisfaction, job involvement, intrinsic motivation, organizational commitment and they report few accidents (Krietner & Kinicki, 2014).

Due to women empowerment, equal opportunities, affirmative action and dual career families; where both wife and husband pursue active careers and family life simultaneously, there has been

an increase in gender diversity in organizations. Gender diversity refers to the relative representation of men and women in organizations, 0/100 proportions reflect homogeneity while 50/50 proportions reflects the highest level of gender diversity (Muhammad, Metz & Kulik, 2015). Gender equality is present when all persons irrespective of gender are able to access and enjoy same rewards, resources and opportunities.

Lauring and Selmer (2013) contend that gender diversity is a surface level diversity, which is less related to the task an employee engages in. However there are various issues that arise from discrimination or harassment based on ones gender. In Kenya organizations with 20 or more employees are required by law to develop a sexual harassment policy (Employment Act, 2010). Interestingly, as women continue to be discriminated on the basis of gender, men too find it difficult to access family friendly organizations with flexible work arrangements (Kurmar, 2015).

The number of women in highest corporate echelons is low; this results from women being unable to break the glass ceiling especially in masculine cultures. According to Manfred Kets (as cited in Krietner and Kinicki, 2014) career growth for women is basically intricate since most times pregnancy, child bearing and stereotypes that form grounds for glass ceiling throws women off the career course.

Tsui *et al.*, (1992) study found that rising gender diversity was connected with poorer institutional attachment for whites and males and leads to interaction difficulties and decreased group contentment (Milliken & Martins, 1996). A qualitative study by Skachkova (2007) found out that female academic staff members were rarely involved in academic administrative leadership. Moreover, there were persistent doubts of their teaching credibility and them experiencing negative feelings from being excluded from various networks. In addition, explorative research by Gupta (2013) indicated that modest gender diversity in organizations increases competitive advantage while higher levels of gender diversity impacts organizational and individual performance negatively.

Ethnicity is a major diversity characteristic in public universities in Kenya. A study by Krietner and Kinicki (2014) indicates that ethnic minority groups suffer from negative career experiences, slower upward mobility, less career satisfaction, diminishing job involvement and higher turnover rates. The belief that cultural background diversity leads to positive outcomes, largely remains questionable (Theodorakopoulos & Budhwar, 2015). However, various inquiries on the relationship between cultural diversity and performance find that ethnically heterogeneous groups make better decisions than homogeneous groups while other studies show no significant results.

Individuals' cultural background automatically determines their identity groups. As indicated by Brickson (2000) empirical research, minorities group is a disadvantaged group in terms of power or opportunities thus are regular targets of discrimination in recruitment, selection, career growth, compensation, training and development. In addition, the resulting negative cultural stereotypes and social categorization may lead to challenges in inclusiveness and functioning of groups (Dahlin, Weingart & Hinds, 2005).

However, information processing, learning opportunities, problem solving competences can all be enhanced through inclusion of cultural diversity while as decreasing groupthink (Theodorakopoulos & Budhwar, 2015). An exploratory research by Mazur (2010) on cultural diversity in organizational theory and practice, found that the only cultural diversity advantage was improved image and superior opportunity in recruiting best personnel. The research suggests that there is no effect of cultural diversity on innovation and creativity.



administrative work thus, possess sufficient knowledge on issues under investigation (Gardiner & Leat, 2001; Bontis, Crossan & Hulland, 2002).

**Table 1. 1: Target Population**

No.	Academic staff Strata	Target Population	Percentage %
1	Professor	358	5.0
2	Associate professor	543	7.6
3	Senior Lecturers	1056	14.8
4	Lecturers	3104	43.5
5	Assistant Lecturers	644	9.0
6	Tutorial Fellows	895	12.5
7	Graduate Assistants	260	3.6
8	Teaching Assistants	283	4.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7143</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: CUE (2017).

### 3.7 Sampling Design and Procedure

This research adopted multiple sampling techniques. This technique allows a researcher effectively answer the research objectives (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Six universities that had existed for the past ten years were purposefully selected. These were established institutions that had solid structures related to workforce diversity and performance measurement. They included; Nairobi, Moi, Kenyatta, Egerton, Jomo Kenyatta University of agriculture and technology and Maseno University. To calculate the sample size, this study utilized Yamane (1967) formula as also used by Muli, Muathe and Muchiri (2014) in their study.

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

Where

**n** = Sample size

**N** = Population size (7143)

**e** = Level of precision or sampling error (0.05)

$$n = \frac{7143}{1 + 7143(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 379$$

Further, Table 1.2 presents the sample; proportionate stratified random sampling technique was utilized to select a sample of 379 academic staff from the target population of 7143 academic staff. The sample was drawn from various strata. These strata included Professors, Associate Professors, Senior Lectures, Lecturers, Assistant Lecturers, Tutorial Fellows, Graduate Assistants and Teaching Assistants. Systematic sampling was then applied to pick the final respondent where the  $n_{th}$  academic staff was selected from the sampling frame obtained from different universities human resource information management system (HRIMS). The  $n_{th}$  number was obtained by dividing the population from every academic staff cadre by the sample size of that cadre.



**Table 1.2: Distribution of Sample Size**

No.	Academic Staff Position / Strata	Target Population	Multiplier	Sample Size	Percentage %
1	Professor	358	0.053	19	5.0
2	Associate professor	543	0.053	29	7.6
3	Senior Lecturers	1056	0.053	56	14.8
4	Lecturers	3104	0.053	165	43.5
5	Assistant Lecturers	644	0.053	34	9.0
6	Tutorial Fellows	895	0.053	47	12.5
7	Graduate Assistants	260	0.053	14	3.6
8	Teaching Assistants	283	0.053	15	4.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7143</b>	<b>0.053</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: CUE (2017).

### 1.7 Hypotheses Testing

This section presents the results of the tests of hypotheses as guided by the general objective of the study. The aim of the study was to determine the effect of workforce diversity on performance of academic staff in public universities in Kenya. Hypotheses tested was, internal dimension has no effect on performance of academic staff in selected public universities in Kenya.

The research variable responses were combined to generate composite scores which were used in multivariate analysis. The regression results of this test are presented in Table 4.15.

**Table 1.3: Regression Results for Direct Relationship**

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.044 <sup>a</sup>	.002	-.002	.60156		
ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.183	1	.183	.505	.478 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	96.257	266	.362		
	Total	96.440	267			
Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.967	.136		29.188	.000
	Internal dimension	.025	.035	.044	.711	.478

a. Dependent Variable: PAS

b. Predictors: (Constant), internal dimension

The regression model for direct relationship from Table 1.3 is presented below;

$$\text{PAS} = 2.669 - 0.044 \text{ Internal dimension}$$

The hypothesis stated that internal dimension has no effect on performance of academic staff. The regression model as estimated in Table 1.3 showed that internal dimension is negatively related to performance. This is an inverse relationship implying that an increase in internal dimension diversity leads to poor performance. However, the model is not statistically significant at ( $\beta = -0.044$ ,  $t = -0.711$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ). Therefore at 95% level of confidence, we fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that internal dimension doesn't have an effect on performance of academic staff.

This finding is in agreement with Pelled (1996); Feldman (2008); Luring and Selmer (2013); Darwin and Selvaraj (2015) studies that found no relation between age and employee performance. Thomas and Feldman (2008); Horwitz and Horwitz (2007) asserts that demographic employee diversity is not significantly associated with both quality and quantity of employee performance. Therefore, though age is one characteristic that triggers categorization among employees, it does not necessarily affect performance. Thomas and Feldman (2008) study on the relationship between age dimension and job performance found out that age was principally unrelated to core task performance, creativity and performance. Dawin (2014) found that age diversity had no significant relationship with employee performance. Mazur (2010) research suggested that there is no relationship between cultural diversity and innovation and creativity. Moreover, a study by Ogaga and Ehimare (2011) that found out that there is a negative relationship between gender and ethnicity with employee performance.

This finding however, contradicts a study by Mkono (2010) that found performance of employees working alongside disabled colleagues was positively influenced. In addition, Theodorakopoulos and Budhwar (2015) argue that employing the disabled minority group leads to improved performance.

Therefore in an academic set up employees' performance is not affected by age, physical ability, gender or ethnicity. Consequently, managers should not pay too much attention on these characteristics when setting strategies to improve employees' performance. Managers need to concentrate on other factors that influence employee performance.

### **1.8 Conclusion, Recommendations for policy and practise**

To establish the existence or non existence of the relationship between internal dimension and performance of academic staff, Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated. The test of significance showed that there was no significant statistical relationship between internal dimension and performance of academic staff. Therefore, internal dimensions do not have an effect on employee performance and therefore, performance of employees is not affected by age, physical ability, gender or ethnicity.

The study recommends that institutions should only concentrate on internal dimensions as a means of ensuring equity and non discrimination but not necessarily as a basis for performance optimization in public universities. Universities need to develop strategic directions on the internal workforce diversity to ensure diversity is valued and appreciated in a university setup.

### **1.9 Suggestion for Further Research**

The researcher proposes that future research ought to be focused on authenticating the findings and conclusions of this inquiry by carrying out related studies using other research designs and by collection of data from other diverse sources in the same sector. Moreover, since this study focused on internal dimensions in public universities in Kenya only; it is crucial to research on the role of internal dimensions in other learning institutions such as private universities, tertiary institutions and other industries to allow additional generalization of findings in more sectors.

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