Diversity and Inclusion and Team Performance of Oil and Gas Firms in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigates the relationship between diversity and inclusion and team performance of the oil and gas firms in Rivers State. A survey study was carried out in this study. The population comprised 4520 employees of the oil and gas firms in Rivers State and the samples were 317 employees of the oil and gas firms. The Taro Yamane 1967 formula was used to derive the sample size. The spearman rank order correlation coefficient was used in analysing the stated hypotheses. The findings revealed a positive correlation between the dimensions of diversity and inclusion (diversity training and inclusivity of voices and perspectives) and team performance. The study concludes that diversity and inclusion relate with the team performance of the oil and gas firms. The study recommends enhancing diversity training and inclusivity of voices and perspectives for improved team performance.

Keywords: Diversity, Inclusion, Diversity Training, Team Performance, Team Output.

Introduction

Team performance is of paramount importance for organizations across various industries and sectors. Effective team performance directly contributes to the achievement of organizational objectives and targets (Tower, 2020). Teams are the force that propels performance, innovation, and growth (Beaumont-Oates, 2024). When teams work cohesively and efficiently, they are productive, better positioned to execute projects, meet deadlines, and deliver high-quality results. High-performing

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teams often foster a culture of innovation and creativity (Thomas, 2023). Through collaboration and diverse perspectives, teams can generate novel ideas, identify new opportunities, develop innovative solutions to complex challenges.

Team performance is critical for organizations seeking to thrive in today's competitive and dynamic business environment (Jones & Smith, 2020). By fostering an environment that nurtures collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement, organizations can unlock the full potential of their teams and achieve sustainable growth and success (Brown & Johnson, 2018). In today's dynamic and interconnected global environment, businesses and organizations are increasingly recognizing the significance of diversity and inclusion (D&I) in driving team performance and overall success (Johnson et al., 2019). Diversity includes a comprehensive range of characteristics, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, and cognitive style (Garcia & Martinez, 2021). Inclusion, on the other hand, refers to the deliberate effort to create an environment where diverse individuals feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and talents (Smith & Lee, 2017).

The link between diversity, inclusion, and team performance has garnered significant attention from researchers, organizational leaders, and policymakers alike. Studies (Mata et al., 2021; Brown & Johnson, 2018; Beaumont-Oates, 2024) have consistently demonstrated that diverse teams are better equipped to solve complex problems, innovate, and adapt to change effectively. However, the mere presence of diversity within a team does not guarantee success; it is the inclusive practices and behaviours that enable diverse teams to harness the full potential of their members and achieve superior performance outcomes (Nishii, & Rich, 2017). As organizations strive to navigate an increasingly complex and competitive business landscape, understanding the key role of diversity and inclusion in driving team performance is essential for fostering innovation, enhancing employee engagement, and achieving sustainable growth (Hunt, et al., 2015).

This paper seeks to explore the intricate relationship between diversity, inclusion, and team performance. By examining existing literature, case studies, and real-world examples. The paper aims to shed light on the mechanisms through which diversity and inclusion influence various aspects of team dynamics, decision-making processes, creativity, and ultimately, organizational performance and discuss practical strategies and best practices that leaders can implement to foster a culture of diversity and inclusion within their teams and unlock the benefits of a diverse workforce.

Statement of Problem

The oil and gas sector in Nigeria face challenges regarding the underrepresentation of women, ethnic minorities, and other marginalized groups in leadership positions (Ugwu, 2019). This lack of diversity at the top levels of management can hinder inclusive decision-making processes and limit the sector's ability to leverage diverse perspectives to enhance team performance and innovation (Hassan & Oyerinde, 2018). Gender disparities, likewise persist in the oil and gas sector in Nigeria, with women often facing barriers to accessing employment opportunities and career advancement (Oloruntoba & Okere, 2016). This imbalance in gender representation can contribute to a lack of diversity within teams and hinder the sector's ability to fully capitalize on the talents and contributions of all employees (Ovadje & Enagbonma, 2018).

Despite efforts to promote diversity and inclusion, the oil and gas sector in Nigeria continues to grapple with challenges related to fostering inclusive work environments (Ugwu, 2019). Discriminatory practices, harassment, and lack of support for diversity initiatives can create barriers to inclusion and diminish team cohesion and performance (Hassan & Oyerinde, 2018). Nigeria's diverse cultural and ethnic landscape poses unique challenges for diversity and inclusion efforts in the oil and gas sector (Oloruntoba & Okere, 2016). Managing cultural differences and promoting inclusivity among employees from various backgrounds require specialized strategies and training programs to mitigate conflicts and promote collaboration within teams (Ovadje & Enagbonma, 2018).

The aforementioned diversity and inclusion challenges in the oil and gas sector can have adverse effects on team dynamics and performance (Ugwu, 2019). Limited diversity and inclusion may lead to decreased employee engagement, higher turnover rates, and reduced productivity, ultimately impacting the sector's overall performance and competitiveness (Hassan & Oyerinde, 2018). Hence exploration provides insights and actionable recommendations to empower organizations to leverage diversity and inclusion as drivers of success in today's rapidly evolving world.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study is to examine the relationship between diversity and inclusion and team performance of oil and gas firms in Rivers State The specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the relationship between diversity training and team innovation of oil and gas firms in Rivers State.

2. Examine the association between diversity training and team output of oil and gas firms in Rivers State.

3. Assess the connection between inclusivity of voices and perspectives and team innovation of oil and gas firms in Rivers State.

4. Examine the link between inclusivity of voices and perspectives and team output of oil and gas firms in Rivers State.

Research Hypotheses

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between diversity training and team innovation of oil and gas firms in Rivers State.

Ho_2: There is no significant relationship between diversity training and team output of oil and gas firms in Rivers State.

Ho_3: There is no significant relationship between inclusivity of voices and perspectives and team innovation of oil and gas firms in Rivers State.

Ho_4: There is no significant relationship between inclusivity of voices and perspectives and team output of oil and gas firms in Rivers State.

Social Identity Theory

This study is anchored on Social Identity Theory (SIT) that posits that individuals derive a significant portion of their identity from the social groups to which they belong (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). According to SIT, people categorize themselves and others based on various characteristics such as race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, or organizational affiliation. In the context of oil and gas firms, Social Identity Theory provides insights into how diversity and inclusion initiatives influence team performance. When employees perceive themselves as part of a diverse and inclusive work environment where their unique identities are respected and valued, they are more likely to identify with their team and organization (Homan et al., 2016). This sense of belonging and identification fosters higher levels of motivation, commitment, and collaboration among team members.

Furthermore, Social Identity Theory suggests that individuals tend to favour in-groups over out-groups. In diverse teams within oil and gas firms, effective diversity and inclusion practices can cultivate a shared identity among team members, transcending differences and promoting a collective sense of purpose (Nishii & Rich, 2017). This shared identity enhances cohesion, communication, and cooperation, ultimately leading to improved team performance.

Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity and inclusion (D&I) have become increasingly recognized as crucial elements in organizational success, fostering innovation, enhancing employee engagement, and driving sustainable growth (Al-Monawer, 2024). Diversity involves features such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic background, and cognitive style. Inclusion, on the other hand, refers to the deliberate effort to create an environment where diverse individuals feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and talents (Nishii & Rich, 2017).

Diversity and inclusion are essential values that organizations strive to embody in order to meet the needs of people from all walks of life. Diversity encompasses the representation of different groups within the workforce, such as gender, age, ethnicity, physical ability, and neurodiversity (Mata et al., 2021). It transcends traditional notions and encompasses a spectrum of characteristics, including diverse ways of thinking, as highlighted by Nobel Prize winner Richard Thaler (Thaler, 2015). Inclusion, on the other hand, entails fostering an environment where every individual feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and talents. It promotes collaboration, creativity, and innovation by embracing and integrating diverse viewpoints (Nishii & Rich, 2017).

The impact of diversity and inclusion on business performance is evident, with research indicating that companies boasting gender-diverse executive teams tend to outperform those lacking diversity, often achieving above-average profitability (McKinsey & Company, 2015). Diverse teams are known to offer a plethora of unique perspectives, which in turn, fosters more innovative approaches to product development (Page, 2017). Moreover, embracing diversity encourages a culture of risk-taking, further driving innovation within organizations (Schein, 2010). Central to this dynamic is the pivotal role of managers, who are instrumental in fostering diversity by challenging assumptions and cultivating a supportive work environment (Al-Monawer, 2024). Ultimately, diversity and inclusion represent not just a corporate initiative but a mindset that intertwines ethical management practices with enhanced performance, rendering organizations more robust and adaptable (Nishii & Rich, 2017).

The importance of diversity and inclusion in organizational contexts has been well-documented in academic research and literature. Studies have consistently shown that diverse teams are better equipped to solve complex problems, innovate, and adapt to change effectively (Hunt et al., 2015). Organizations with inclusive cultures incline to outdo their peers, with higher levels of productivity, engagement, and profitability

(Shore et al., 2009). However, despite growing recognition of the benefits of diversity and inclusion, many organizations still face challenges in effectively implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives. Barriers such as unconscious bias, systemic discrimination, and lack of inclusive leadership can hinder progress towards creating truly diverse and inclusive workplaces (Ely & Thomas, 2001). Therefore, it is imperative for organizations to prioritize diversity and inclusion efforts as strategic imperatives, embedding them into their culture, policies, and practices. By fostering an inclusive environment where all employees feel valued, respected, and empowered, organizations can unlock the full potential of their diverse workforce, driving innovation, enhancing team performance, and achieving sustainable success in today's dynamic and competitive business landscape.

Diversity Training

Diversity training serves as a vital human resources initiative aimed at addressing diversity issues and enhancing team cohesion within organizations. Such training endeavours to raise awareness about diversity-related matters and educate professionals, ultimately fostering a more inclusive workplace environment (Haddock-Millar & Sanyal, 2017). It equips participants with the necessary skills to interact, collaborate, and work effectively with individuals possessing diverse qualities (O'Donovan, 2018).

Companies typically conduct diversity training through group exercises, presentations, and guest speakers. Diversity training encourages professionals to broaden their perspectives beyond their own experiences (Nishii & Rich, 2017), promoting a more inclusive and considerate workplace culture. By covering topics such as race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and disabilities, these programs aim to cultivate a culture of respect and consideration (Harris & Orozco, 2019). Ultimately, diversity training enhances cultural awareness, provides actionable tools, and promotes sensitivity, thereby contributing to improved teamwork and productivity within organizations.

Diversity training helps cultivate inclusive workplaces where employees from diverse backgrounds feel valued, respected, and included (Harris & Orozco, 2019). In a sector as diverse as oil and gas, where employees often come from various ethnic, cultural, and educational backgrounds, fostering inclusivity is essential for teamwork and efficiency. Diversity training raises awareness about unconscious bias, stereotypes, and discriminatory behaviours that may exist within the workplace (O'Donovan, 2018). By educating employees about these issues, organizations in the oil and gas sector can work towards mitigating bias and creating a fair and equitable work environment.

Oil and gas companies in Nigeria often operate in multicultural and multinational settings, requiring effective cross-cultural communication skills (Haddock-Millar & Sanyal, 2017). Diversity training equips employees with the tools and strategies to communicate respectfully and effectively across diverse cultural backgrounds. A supportive and inclusive work environment fosters higher levels of employee engagement and retention (Nishii & Rich, 2017). Diversity training demonstrates an organization's commitment to diversity and inclusion, which can boost morale and loyalty among employees in the oil and gas sector. In a sector where compliance with local and international regulations is crucial, diversity training helps mitigate legal risks associated with discrimination and harassment (Harris & Orozco, 2019). Moreover, organizations that prioritize diversity and inclusion are likely to enjoy a positive reputation among stakeholders, including investors, customers, and the society.

Inclusivity of Voices and Perspectives

Inclusivity of voices and perspectives is a crucial aspect of fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace culture. It involves actively seeking and valuing contributions from individuals with different backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints (Van Knippenberg, & Schippers, 2007). By embracing a wide range of perspectives, organizations can enhance creativity, innovation, and problem-solving capabilities (Page, 2017). Inclusivity of voices and perspectives encourages open dialogue, facilitates knowledge sharing, and promotes a sense of belonging among employees (Nishii. & Rich, 2017).

Inclusive voices and perspectives bring together a diverse range of experiences, expertise, and insights. In a complex industry like oil and gas, where challenges are multifaceted, having diverse perspectives can lead to more comprehensive problem-solving and more effective decision-making processes (Mata et al., 2021). The oil and gas sector are constantly evolving, with technological advancements, market fluctuations, and environmental concerns shaping its landscape. Inclusive voices and perspectives foster an environment conducive to innovation by encouraging creativity and the exploration of new ideas (Page, 2017). This enables organizations to adapt more readily to changes in the industry and seize emerging opportunities.

The oil and gas sector in Nigeria often operate in complex socio-political contexts, involving various stakeholders such as local communities, government agencies, and environmental organizations. Inclusive voices and perspectives facilitate better understanding and engagement with these stakeholders, leading to more sustainable and mutually beneficial outcomes (Nishii & Rich, 2017). Inclusive voices and perspectives can contribute to the development and implementation of socially

responsible practices within the oil and gas sector. By considering the diverse needs and concerns of stakeholders, organizations can adopt more sustainable approaches to resource extraction, environmental management, and community development (Hassan & Oyerinde, 2018). Inclusive voices and perspectives foster a culture of respect, collaboration, and belonging within organizations. Employees feel valued and empowered to contribute their unique insights, leading to higher levels of engagement, job satisfaction, and retention (Ugwu, 2019). Overall, promoting inclusive voices and perspectives in the Nigerian oil and gas sector is not only a matter of social justice and equity but also a strategic imperative for organizational success and sustainability in a rapidly changing industry.

Team Performance

Teams that operate at optimal performance levels are crucial for the success of organizations, particularly in dynamic sectors like the Nigerian oil and gas industry (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Such teams leverage individual talents, optimize processes, and minimize inefficiencies, resulting in increased productivity and performance (Katzenbach, & Smith, 2015). Effective team performance leads to improved decision-making processes, enhanced employee engagement and satisfaction, boosted morale and team spirit, as well as increased customer satisfaction and loyalty (Hackman & Wageman, 2005; Salas et al., 2015). Moreover, high-performing teams exhibit greater adaptability and resilience in the face of change and uncertainty (Homan, et al., 2016).

When teams consist of individuals with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and expertise, they are better equipped to make informed decisions by considering a wide range of perspectives and potential implications (Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). Engaged and satisfied employees contribute positively to team performance, as they are motivated to collaborate, innovate, and invest their time and effort in achieving shared goals (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). A supportive team environment, where individuals feel valued and respected, fosters camaraderie and mutual support among team members, thereby enhancing team morale and cohesion (West et al., 2014). Through effective communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills, teams in the Nigerian oil and gas sector can successfully navigate challenges, capitalize on opportunities, and maintain momentum amidst evolving circumstances (Katzenbach & Smith, 2015).

Team Innovation

Team innovation is a critical driver of organizational success, characterized by the collective generation, development, and implementation of novel ideas or solutions to

address challenges or opportunities (West et al., 2014). In today's rapidly changing business landscape, organizations rely on innovation to stay competitive, drive growth, and adapt to evolving market demands (Brown & Johnson, 2018. Alharbi, et al., 2019)). Effective team innovation involves harnessing the diverse perspectives, expertise, and experiences of team members to foster creativity and generate innovative solutions (Homan et al., 2016). Research suggests that certain team characteristics and processes play a crucial role in facilitating innovation. For example, teams that possess high levels of psychological safety, where members feel comfortable expressing their ideas and taking risks, are more likely to engage in innovative behaviours (Edmondson, 1999).

Additionally, team composition, including diversity in terms of skills, backgrounds, and perspectives, can stimulate creativity and lead to more innovative outcomes (Nishii, & Rich, 2017).

Effective communication and collaboration are also essential components of team innovation (Salas, et al., 2015). Open communication channels allow for the exchange of ideas, feedback, and constructive criticism, facilitating the development and refinement of innovative concepts (Katzenbach, & Smith, 2015). Moreover, collaborative problem-solving processes enable teams to leverage the collective intelligence and creativity of their members to overcome challenges and generate breakthrough innovations (Page, 2017). Team innovation is a multifaceted process that involves leveraging the diverse talents, perspectives, and experiences of team members to generate novel solutions and drive organizational success. By fostering an environment of psychological safety, promoting diversity, and facilitating effective communication and collaboration, organizations can empower teams to innovate and thrive in today's dynamic business environment.

Team Output

Team output refers to the collective results achieved by a group of individuals working together towards a common goal or objective. It encompasses the combined efforts, contributions, and deliverables produced by team members, reflecting the overall performance and effectiveness of the team (Salas et al., 2015). The output of a team can vary widely depending on factors such as team composition, dynamics, processes, and the nature of the task or project at hand. Research has shown that several factors influence team output. One key determinant is team composition, including the diversity of skills, expertise, and perspectives among team members (Homan et al., 2016). Diverse teams often generate more innovative ideas, solve problems more effectively, and achieve better outcomes compared to homogeneous teams (Nishii & Rich, 2017).

Effective communication and collaboration are also critical for optimizing team output (Katzenbach & Smith, 2015). When team members communicate openly, share information, and collaborate effectively, they can leverage each other's strengths, coordinate their efforts, and overcome challenges more efficiently, leading to higher productivity and better results (Page, 2017). Furthermore, team output is influenced by the team's shared goals, clarity of roles and responsibilities, and alignment with organizational objectives (Hackman & Wageman, 2005). When team members are motivated, engaged, and empowered to contribute their best efforts towards a common purpose, they are more likely to achieve superior results (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Team output is a critical measure of team performance and effectiveness, reflecting the combined efforts and achievements of team members. By promoting diversity, fostering effective communication and collaboration, and aligning goals and objectives, organizations can enhance team output and drive success in today's dynamic business environment.

Relationship between Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives and Team Performance

Numerous empirical studies have explored the link between diversity and inclusion initiatives and team performance (Nishii & Rich, 2017; Fitriana, 2023; Schmidt, 2021, Al-Monawer, 2024). Research suggests that diversity training programs can enhance team performance by promoting understanding, collaboration, and creativity among team members (Fitriana, 2023). By increasing awareness of diverse perspectives and reducing biases, these programs facilitate more innovative problem-solving and decision-making processes, ultimately leading to improved team innovation and output.

Furthermore, fostering inclusivity of voices and perspectives within teams has been found to positively impact team performance. When all team members feel valued and empowered to contribute their ideas and opinions, it promotes psychological safety, trust, and engagement within the team (Nishii. & Rich, 2017; Schmidt, 2021). This inclusive environment encourages open communication, constructive feedback, and collective problem-solving, resulting in higher levels of team innovation and productivity.

Methodology

A survey design was utilized to attain the objectives. A population of 4520 employees of the oil and gas firms in Rivers State were covered. The sample size comprises 317 employees using Taro Yeme 1967 formula (n = N/ 1 + N (e)2). Where, n = Sample size, N = Population size and e = the error of sample at 5% or 0.05 level. The spearman rank order correlation coefficient was used in analysing the earlier state hypotheses.

This statistical measure was chosen for its suitability in assessing the relationship between variables, aligning with the study's objectives and ensuring robust analysis of the data collected.

Result

317 questionnaires were distributed, but only 317 (86.4%) copies were returned and constitute the valid questionnaire. The hypotheses test is undertaken at a 95% confidence interval. Hypothesis are rejected when $P < 0.05$ and accepted when $P > 0.05$.

Table 1: *Diversity Training and Team performance*

Correlations

			Diversity Training	Team Innovation	Team output performance
Spearman's rho	Diversity Training	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.721**	.669**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	317	317	317
	Team Innovation	Correlation Coefficient	.721**	1.000	.655**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	317	317	317
	Team output performance	Correlation Coefficient	.669**	.655**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	317	317	317

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: SPSS Output, 2024.

Diversity Training and Team Innovation

The result of the data analysis reveals that at a significant level $p < 0.05$ (0.000 < 0.05), rho = 0.721**. The significance level of 0.000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05. The rho value of 0.721** shows a strong positive correlation between diversity training and team innovation. Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho_1) is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis (Ha_1) is accepted. This proposes that diversity training and team innovation have a significant positive relationship.

Diversity Training and Team Output: The result of the data analysis reveals that at a significant level $p < 0.05$ (0.000 < 0.05), rho = 0.669**. This means that there is a significant link between diversity training and team output. The null hypothesis, Ho_2, is rejected and the alternate accepted. This suggests that there is a strong positive relationship between diversity training and team output.

Table 2: *Inclusivity of Voices and Perspectives and Team Performance*

Correlations

			Inclusivisity of Voices and Perspectives	Team Innovation	Team output performance
Spearman's rho	Inclusivity of Voices and Perspectives	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.739**	.691**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	317	317	317
	Team Innovation	Correlation Coefficient	.739**	1.000	.655**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	317	317	317
	Team output performance	Correlation Coefficient	.691**	.655**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	317	317	317

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: SPSS Output, 2024.

Inclusivity of Voices and Perspectives and Team Innovation: The result of the data analysis reveals that at a significant level $p < 0.05$ (0.000 < 0.05), rho = 0.739**. The significance level of 0.000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05. A strong positive correlation exists inclusivity of voices and perspectives and team innovation. Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho_3) is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis (Ha_3) is accepted. This proposes that inclusivity of voices and perspectives and team innovation have a significant positive relationship.

Inclusivity of Voices and Perspectives and Team Output: The result of the data analysis reveals that at a significant level $p < 0.05$ (0.000 < 0.05), rho = 0.691**. This means that there is a significant association between inclusivity of voices and perspectives and team output. The null hypothesis, Ho_4, is rejected and the alternate accepted. This suggests that there is a strong positive relationship between inclusivity of voices and perspectives and team output.

Discussion of Findings

The test of hypotheses one and two revealed that diversity training is positively correlated with the team performance of the oil and gas firms in Rivers State. The outcomes of the bivariate analysis show that diversity training was associated with the measures of team performance (team innovation and team output), This implies that engaging in diversity training enhances the team performance of the oil and gas firms. The positive correlation observed between diversity training and team performance underscores the pivotal role of D&I initiatives in fostering innovation and productivity. By investing in diversity training programmes, organisations can cultivate a workforce that thrives on diverse perspectives and experiences, ultimately driving better team

performance outcomes. This is in line with Haddock-Millar & Sanyal, (2017) and Harris & Orozco (2019) that claims that diversity training programmes foster more creative problem-solving and decision-making processes, which in turn boost team innovation and productivity, by raising awareness of various viewpoints and lowering prejudices.

The results of testing hypotheses three and four showed a positive correlation between inclusivity of voices and perspectives and the oil and gas companies in Rivers State's team performance. The bivariate analysis's results indicate that inclusivity of voices and perspectives was linked to team performance metrics, such as output and innovation. This suggests that providing inclusivity of voices and perspectives improves the performance of oil and gas companies' teams. When employees feel valued and empowered to contribute their ideas and opinions, it creates a conducive environment for collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving. Recognising the significance of inclusivity reinforces the need for organizations to prioritize creating a culture of respect, openness, and psychological safety within their teams. This conforms with Page (2017) and Nishii. & Rich (2017) that fostering inclusivity of voices and perspectives within teams has been found to positively impact team performance. When all team members feel valued and empowered to contribute their ideas and opinions, it promotes psychological safety, trust, and engagement within the team

Furthermore, the alignment of the study's findings with existing literature strengthens the credibility of the results. Drawing from research by scholars such as Haddock-Millar & Sanyal (2017), Harris & Orozco (2019), Page (2017), Nishii & Rich (2017), and Edmondson (1999), the study underscores the consistent positive relationship between D&I initiatives and team performance in the oil and gas sector. This alignment not only reinforces the validity of the findings but also provides a robust foundation for future research and practice in the field.

Finally, the implications of the findings for organisational strategy are significant. By understanding the positive impact of D&I initiatives on team performance, oil and gas firms in Rivers State can strategically integrate diversity and inclusion practices into their policies and practices. Doing so can contribute to a more dynamic and high-performing workforce, thereby enhancing the organisation's competitive advantage and long-term sustainability. In essence, the study underscores the critical role of D&I in driving organisational success within the oil and gas industry in Rivers State.

Conclusion

The study examined diversity and inclusion and team performance. The results show that diversity and inclusion initiatives, particularly focusing on diversity training and

inclusivity of voices and perspectives, significantly contribute to enhancing team performance. By fostering understanding, collaboration, and creativity among team members, diversity training programs promote innovative problem-solving and decision-making processes. Similarly, creating an inclusive environment where all team members feel valued and empowered to contribute their unique viewpoints encourages open communication, trust, and engagement within the team. Consequently, organizations that prioritize diversity and inclusion in their team dynamics are likely to experience higher levels of team innovation and productivity, ultimately leading to greater success and competitiveness in today's dynamic business landscape. As organizations continue to recognize the importance of diversity and inclusion, investing in these initiatives will undoubtedly yield substantial benefits for both teams and the overall organization.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proffered to the oil and gas firms in Rivers state

1. Develop and implement diversity training programmes tailored to the specific needs and challenges of the oil and gas industry.

2. Ensure that diversity training covers topics such as cultural sensitivity, unconscious bias, and inclusive communication to enhance team dynamics and innovation.

3. Create a culture of inclusivity where all voices and perspectives are valued and respected within the organisation.

4. Encourage leadership to actively promote diversity and inclusivity through policies, practices, and behaviours.

5. Conduct regular assessments and surveys to measure the effectiveness of diversity training programmes and inclusivity initiatives.

6. Gather feedback from team members to identify areas for improvement and address any concerns or challenges related to diversity and inclusion.

7. Encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing among diverse teams to leverage different perspectives and insights.

8. Provide opportunities for cross-functional teams to work together on innovative projects and initiatives.

9. Promote diversity in leadership positions by implementing inclusive hiring and promotion practices.

10. Ensure that diverse voices are represented at all levels of the organisation to foster a culture of inclusion and innovation.

11. Invest in technology and resources that support diversity and inclusion initiatives, such as online training platforms and diversity analytics tools.

12. Provide access to resources and support networks for underrepresented groups to help them succeed and thrive within the organisation.

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