

**THE EFFECT OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY ON EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY IN  
WORK ORGANIZATIONS IN PORT HARCOURT, NIGERIA**

**UKACHUKWU, CHUKWUMA C.  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
IMO STATE UNIVERSITY, OWERRI  
IMO STATE, NIGERIA  
[Cuchy4real@gmail.com](mailto:Cuchy4real@gmail.com)**

**And**

**IHERIOHANMA, E. B. J  
DIRECTORATE OF GENERAL STUDIES  
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY  
OWERRI, IMO STATE, NIGERIA  
[Iherioha2005@yahoo.com](mailto:Iherioha2005@yahoo.com)**

**Abstract**

The thrust of this study is the investigation of the impact of cultural differences on the productivity of employees within organizations. Developments in science and technology have made it possible for modern work organizations to have people of variegated cultural backgrounds working together as employees. This variety in cultural background or cultural diversity creates challenges in the workplace which lead to conflicts and affect team work when not properly managed. This study sheds light therefore on how differences in cultural orientations can affect the productivity of employees and organizations. This usually arises because organizations channel most of their efforts to improving workers' skills and knowledge to the detriment of employees' daily organizational experience, in terms of cultural differences. The quantitative research method was adopted for data collection. Chi-square analysis was used to test the hypotheses formulated and the findings presented and discussed. The findings show that cultural diversity significantly affects the ability of employees to build or work in teams. This consequently affects their productivity. Since conflict arising from cultural differences wastes time and reduces employee morale, this study recommends that organizations should strive to create organizational culture that not only incorporates and enhances the cultural diversity of its workforce composition, but also enables employees to build relationships and acknowledge each other regardless of their differences of origin and background.

**Keywords:** Culture, Cultural Diversity, Employees, Organizations, Productivity.

## **Introduction**

As in other parts of the world, organisations in Nigeria have increasingly become profit driven. This drive is primarily because organizations that do not make profit usually find it difficult to survive in the competitive economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Central to this profit drive in organizations are the employees or human capital whose skills are required to manipulate other organizational resources (financial and material) and convert them into goods and services. This centrality of employees in work organizations has as such elevated the benefits of efficiency as tools of productivity (Bontis 1999, Iheriohanma 2008). Hence, the recurring theme in current organizational literature has been in the area of human capital development, especially skills development. As a result, less attention has been paid to some other employee challenges in the work organization which also affect their productivity such as diversity. This diversity encompasses race, gender, ethnic group, age, personality, cognitive style, tenure, organizational function, education, background and more. This study focuses on cultural diversity among employees in modern work organizations.

Taylor (1956) defines culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society". Relying on the above definition, cultural diversity of the labour force is increasingly becoming a reality in most countries. The social composition of employees within work organizations is changing all over the world. Just as rapid scientific and technological development has brought about radical changes in modern work organizations, it has also increased the ability of people from diverse cultural origins to migrate from their places of origin to urban cities to seek employment. In addition, modern education has limited the concentration of particular skills and trade within particular cultures or territories. It has also opened up opportunities for people from different cultures to acquire similar skills and training as the school curriculum is usually streamlined within (and sometimes across) a national boundary. Therefore, wider opportunities exist for employees from diverse cultural backgrounds to acquire skill sets which facilitate their employment into work organizations in which employees from other cultural backgrounds are also employed. Hence, most modern organizations employ people whose cultural origins and orientations differ significantly. In other words, cultural diversity has become a common-place reality in the employee make-up of most organizations.

Ogunbameru (2004:4) defines an organisation as "a collection of people, who with consciously co-coordinated efforts, pursue and contribute to the attainment of a common purpose". Akanwa and Ohiri (2003:71) observe that "through an organisation, one can enlarge one's ability and do work more efficiently than one could if one had to work without associating with others". Hence an organisation is regarded as the single most important factor in establishing and sustaining

productive work habits. Organizations exist to produce goods and services and thus, productivity has become "a central theme in the work environment" (Alugbuo 2004:102). Productivity represents the economic value of what is produced by an employee which in turn serves as fuel to organizational growth. This view is supported by Olabosipo et al (2004) in their assertion that "high productivity is a goal that ensures the long-term survival of organizations". Hence, a productive organization could be said to be a progressive organization.

On cultural diversity, Powell and Persico (1995) opine that it is "the representation, in one social system, of people with distinctly different group affiliations of cultural significance". This distinction encompasses differences in cultural values, attitudes, practices, philosophy, etc among a group of people in a given environment. Therefore, in organizations, heterogeneity of culture derives mostly from the ethnic origin, language, orientations and religion of employees which affect how individual employees perceive self and others and ultimately, their interactions with other employees in the work place. The existence of such cultural diversity in an industrializing, multi-cultural society such as Nigeria translates to a culturally diverse workforce.

Since modern work organizations are usually highly concentrated in mainly urban areas, workers are usually compelled to migrate to such urban centres even outside their cultural sphere in search of work. Hence, the past two decades witnessed a phenomenal and unprecedented migration of large numbers of job seekers of diverse cultural orientations from the cultural areas to the cosmopolitan cities in Nigeria. Evidence of this can be seen in the geometrical increase in the population of the urban cities in Nigeria especially Lagos, Abuja, Kano and Port Harcourt. Hence, Aworemi et al (2011) assert that "there had been a tremendous expansion of urban areas consequent to the rapid rural-urban migration ". They added further that "in 1974, rural population was 75% of the total population but by 2001, urban population had assumed a high dimension of 45% of the total population of the country". In these urban cities, employees with diverse cultural leanings find themselves seeking employment and working alongside employees with differing cultural origins.

In view of the above stated, Hong and Page (2001 and 2004) argue that "ethnic diversity can be beneficial to the organizations' performance through better decision making and improved problem solving". This study therefore aims to analyse the effect of cultural diversity on employee's performance within organisations in Nigeria.

For the purposes of this study, the following concepts would be used as interpreted below:

**Culture** refers to that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.

**Cultural Diversity** is used to refer to the representation, in one social system, of people with distinctly different group affiliations of cultural significance.

**Employees** refer to a group of people who work in an organization to produce value (goods and services) under a contract of employment in return for wages.

**Organisation** is used to refer to intentionally structured human groupings in which work is done and set goals and objectives are accomplished.

**Productivity** refers to the measure of how much value individual employees add to the goods or services which an organisation produces.

### **Statement of the Problem**

As the importance of productivity in the organizational context increases, organizations invest large resources in improving the skills and aptitudes of their employees. By so doing, other aspects of the work environment that affect an employee's performance are relegated to positions of insignificance with little or no regard as to their impact on employee morale and efficiency. Hence, despite the existence of cultural differences in the work place, organizations still concentrate on human capital development activities that do not incorporate the need to address the issue of cultural diversity.

Since work organizations usually channel their efforts towards increased performance and profit maximization, the other spectrum of the employees' daily organizational experience, in terms of cultural differences, is usually ignored. Little effort appears to be made toward having a deep respect and understanding of the simmering tensions among employees arising from cultural differences in an organization. In addition, management usually ignores how this affects employee interactions, team-building activities, teamwork and interpersonal communication. This work aims to review the effect of cultural diversity on the ability of employees to retain high morale and produce optimally. The focus is on three selected organizations in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions are formulated to aid in this investigation. These include:

1. Do cultural differences exist among employees working within organizations in Port Harcourt, Nigeria?
2. Do differences in culture affect team-work in organizations in Port Harcourt, Nigeria?
3. Does cultural diversity improve productivity in organizations in Port Harcourt, Nigeria?

### **Objective of the Study**

This study has as its general objective the analysis of the effect of differences in cultural origin and orientations on the ability of workers to maintain high morale and produce optimally.

In its specifics, the study aims:

- 1) To ascertain the existence of cultural differences among employees working within organizations in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.
- 2) To investigate the impact of cultural differences on team-work in organizations in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.
- 3) To examine the relationship between cultural differences and employee productivity in organizations in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

### **Hypotheses**

1. Ho 1: Cultural differences do not significantly exist among employees working within organizations in Port Harcourt.
2. Ho 2: Team-work is not significantly affected by cultural differences among employees in organizations in Port Harcourt.
3. Ho 3: Cultural differences do not have any significant negative impact on employee productivity in organizations in Port Harcourt.

### **Significance of the Study/Rationale**

**Theoretically**, this study contributes to the body of knowledge in that it shows that in this era of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and rapid globalization, organizations increasingly employ workers from heterogeneous cultures. It further highlights that when this heterogeneity is not properly managed, the impact can affect the level of performance of employees in terms of their productivity. It also attempts to show that organizations that are able to manage culturally diverse workforce will derive the benefits of increased employee satisfaction and commitment as well as improved performance in a world that is fast becoming culturally diffused but sensitive.

**Practically**, it derives its significance from the reality that organizations which are able to create work environments in which cultural differences among employees are properly harnessed and synthesized usually enable their employees improve their potentials, maximize their efficiency and improve productivity. It will serve as a signpost to the management of organizations, which aim to create work environments in which culturally heterogeneous employees are encouraged, to bring fresh ideas and perceptions that can effectively enhance the way employees do their work and improve their products and services. It will also enable management understand and manage cultural diversity among employees, nurture their creativity

and innovation as well as tap their innate capacities for efficiency which will translate to organizational growth and improved competitiveness.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The social cohesion theory is adopted in this study. According to Maxwell (1996:3), "social cohesion is the building of shared values and communities of interpretation, reducing disparities.... and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in common enterprise, facing shared challenges, and that they are members of the same community". A socially cohesive group or society is one in which "the members share common values which enable them to identify common aims and objectives, and share a common set of moral principles and codes of behaviour through which to conduct their relations with one another" (Kearns and Forrest, 2000: 997). Social cohesion, the outcome of social and physiological processes which link individuals into social system also occurs in group interactions in organizations.

Social cohesion, when achieved, enables employees in an organization to work with tolerance for differences on a day-to-day basis across the organization with everyone contributing his best. It reduces the divisions of cultural and other social diversities while enabling employees develop bonds which link them to one another and to the work team as a whole. When the divisions are reduced, employees achieve synergy. This synergy is the constructive power of teamwork and is only attained when employees overcome differences in culture that set them apart and working as individuals. Absence of the ability to cohere creates conflicting dispositions in employees and greatly undermines their ability to work as a team. When employees in organizations are unable to build strong work teams, cooperation becomes difficult and their productivity is affected. This is because group coordination errors or poor group efficiency occur in the absence of group cohesion and this leads to reduction in performance and productivity of employees.

### **Methodology**

The study primarily focuses on the effect of cultural differences within organizations on employees' productivity especially in major urban cities. Port Harcourt is selected as the study area since it is among the largest, industrialized cosmopolitan areas of Nigeria. It also adequately encompasses the diversity of the Nigerian cultures as people from the various ethnic origins are easily found within its territories.

The research method primarily adopted in this study is the quantitative research method. This method is considered appropriate based on the subject matter and the need to produce quantitative, reliable data that can be generalized to a larger population. Because of the empirical nature of the study, the survey method is employed in the collection of primary data for analysis. The questionnaire is specifically designed to solicit information concerning the effects of cultural differences within an organization on productivity.

The population of this study is the employees of Associated Telecoms And Electronics Limited (Assotel), Multinet Systems and Daatim Nigeria Limited. These companies are situated in Port Harcourt. While the first two companies deal primarily on fast moving commodity goods, the third company is a consultancy that specializes on provision of business solutions to companies. Information concerning the staff strength and staff composition was obtained from the Human Resources Department of the companies after the necessary permission was granted. The total population of the Assotel is about 51 employees. Multinet Systems has a total population of about 40 employees while Daatim has 43 employees. Hence, a total of 134 employees work in these companies. Of this number, about 118 employees have worked for periods of up to six months and above. This constitutes the actual population for this study. Hundred (100) copies of questionnaires were randomly administered to a sample size of 100 (about 85%) employees out of which 93 questionnaires were returned properly filled. It is important to note that all the companies are private organizations and as such, those on and above the positions of general managers were excluded from the sample population. This is to reduce bias which may influence the outcome of this study since they may have personal stakes in these companies.

The Likert 5-point scale was adopted in the development of 10 close-ended questions in the questionnaire for easy interpretation. The structuring of the questionnaire was done in order to guide against unnecessary deviation by respondents. Simple percentages were used in analysing data collected. The Chi-Square test of significance was used to weigh the evidence suggested by the data before conclusions were drawn. Qualitative data were collected from secondary sources such as textbooks, journals and other published works to support the findings of this study.

## Data Presentation

**Table 1: Distribution and Collection of Questionnaire**

	<b>Assotel</b>	<b>Multinet</b>	<b>Daatim</b>	<b>Total</b>
Number of questionnaire distributed	34	33	33	100
Number of questionnaire returned properly filled	30	32	31	93
Number of questionnaire returned not properly filled	4	1	2	7
% number of questionnaire returned properly filled	88.24%	96.96%	93.933%	93%
% number of questionnaire returned not properly filled	11.76%	3.03%	6.06%	7%

**Source:** Field Survey, 2013

Table one shows that of the 100 questionnaire distributed, 93 were properly filled. Seven questionnaires were rejected because of the multiple errors in the filling. The 93 properly filled questionnaires represent 93% of the total questionnaires retrieved in the three companies. The analysis of data collected was made based on this figure.

**Table 2: Background Characteristics of Respondents**

Characteristics	Classification	Assotel	Multinet	Daatim	Total	Total%
<b>Sex</b>	Male	3	5	8	16	17.2%
	Female	27	27	23	77	82.8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Age</b>	18-25	10	7	8	25	26.9%
	26-35	14	13	12	39	41.9%
	36-45	6	11	10	27	29.0%
	46 and Above	0	1	1	2	2.2%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Highest Educational Qualification</b>	WASC/GCE	5	4	2	11	11.8%
	NCE/OND	12	11	8	31	33.3%
	DEGREE/HND	13	17	19	49	52.7%
	MSC/PHD	0	0	2	2	2.15%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Number of Months Worked</b>	6-12 Months	7	6	3	16	17.2%
	13-24 Months	12	14	11	37	39.8%
	25-36 Months	7	9	15	31	33.3%
	37 Months/Above	4	3	2	9	9.7%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Tribe</b>	Yoruba	2	1	4	7	7.53%
	Igbo	15	13	9	37	39.78%
	Efik	7	8	4	19	20.43%
	Ijaw	1	2	3	6	6.45%
	Ikwerre	2	2	5	9	9.68%
	Ogoni	0	1	3	4	4.30%
	Anioma (Delta)	1	2	2	5	5.38%
	Igalla	2	3	1	6	6.45%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>100%</b>	

**Source:** Field Survey, 2013

From Table 2 above, 17.2% of the respondents are male while 82.8% are female. With regards to age, 26.9% of the employees fall within the age range of 18 - 25 while 41.9%, 29.0% and 2.2% were within 26 - 35, 36 - 45 and 46 and above years respectively. In terms of academic qualification, those who possess WAEC/GCE



constitute 11.8%, NCE/OND 33.3%, HND/Degree 52.7% and M.Sc/Ph.D 2.15%.

Respondents who have worked for periods of 6 – 12 months constitute 17.2% of total respondents while 39.8% have worked for periods of 13 – 24 months. Those who have worked for 25 – 36 months total 33.3% and those who have worked above 37 months constitute 9.7%. Of the total respondents, 7.53% are Yoruba, 39.78% are Igbo, 20.43% are Efik, 6.45% are Ijaw, 9.68% are Ikwerre, 4.30% are Ogoni, 5.38% are Anioma (Delta) and 6.45% Igalla.

### Test of Hypotheses

Three hypotheses were generated and were tested in this study based on the respondents' opinion obtained from the research instrument. Hence, questions 1, 5 and 8 were used in testing the hypotheses. Chi-square analysis was used to test the hypotheses and the summary of the analyses presented below.

### Hypothesis I

Ho 1: Cultural differences do not significantly exist among employees working within organizations in Port Harcourt.

**Table 3.1: Cultural differences exist among employees within the organization I work for in Port Harcourt.**

Options	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
Assotel	5	16	4	4	1	30
Multinet	8	18	0	6	0	32
Daatim	7	19	2	3	0	31
<b>Total</b>	20	53	6	13	1	93

Source: Field Survey, 2013.

**Table 3.2: Calculation of Observed and Expected Frequencies for Hypothesis I**

Options	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
Assotel	25 (30.81)	64 (65.32)	12 (5.55)	8 (8.01)	1 (0.31)	110
Multinet	40 (34.73)	72 (73.64)	0 (6.25)	12 (9.03)	0 (0.35)	124
Daatim	35 (34.45)	76 (73.04)	6 (6.20)	6 (8.96)	0 (0.34)	123
<b>Total</b>	100	212	18	26	1	357

Source: Field Survey, 2013.

**Table 3.3 Chi-Square Test of Hypothesis I**

Ob	Ex	Ob-Ex	(Ob – Ex) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(Ob - Ex)^2}{Ex}$
25	30.81	-5.81	33.76	1.1
40	34.73	5.27	27.77	0.8
35	34.45	0.55	0.30	0.01
64	65.32	-1.32	1.74	0.03
72	73.64	-1.64	2.69	0.04
76	73.04	2.96	8.76	0.02
12	5.55	6.45	41.60	7.5
0	6.25	6.25	39.06	6.25
6	6.20	-0.20	0.04	0.20
8	8.01	0.01	0.00	0.00
12	9.03	2.97	8.82	0.98
6	8.96	-2.96	8.76	0.98
1	0.31	0.69	0.48	1.55
0	0.35	-0.35	0.12	0.34
0	0.34	-0.34	0.12	0.34
				<b>X<sup>2</sup> = 20.14</b>

From table 3.3, at 5% (0.05) level of significance and 8 degree of freedom, X<sup>2</sup> tabulated = 15.5 and the calculated is 20.14. Since the tabulated value of 15.5 is less than the calculated value of 20.14, we reject H<sub>0</sub> 1. Therefore, cultural differences significantly exist among employees working within organizations in Port Harcourt.

### Hypothesis II

Ho 2: Team-work is not significantly affected by cultural differences among employees in organizations in Port Harcourt.

**Table 4.1: Cultural differences among employees reduce team building and team work**

Options	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
Assotel	2	9	4	8	7	30
Multinet	14	11	1	5	1	32
Daatim	8	11	1	3	8	31
<b>Total</b>	24	31	6	16	16	93

Source: Field Survey, 2013.

**Table 4.2 Calculation of Observed and Expected Frequencies for Hypothesis II**

Options	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
Assotel	10 (31.35)	36 (32.4)	12 (4.70)	16 (8.36)	7 (4.18)	81
Multinet	70 (49.55)	44 (51.2)	3 (7.43)	10 (13.21)	1 (6.61)	128
Daatim	40 (39.10)	44 (40.4)	3 (5.86)	6 (10.43)	8 (5.21)	101
<b>Total</b>	120	124	18	32	16	310

Source: Field Survey, 2013.

**Table 4.3 Chi-Square Test of Hypothesis II**

Ob	Ex	Ob-Ex	(Ob – Ex) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(Ob - Ex)^2}{Ex}$
10	31.35	-21.35	455.82	14.54
70	49.55	20.45	418.20	8.44
40	39.1	0.9	0.81	0.02
36	32.4	3.6	12.96	0.4
44	51.2	-7.2	51.84	1.01
44	40.4	3.6	12.96	0.32
12	4.70	7.3	53.29	11.34
3	7.43	-4.43	19.62	2.64
3	5.86	-2.86	8.18	1.4
16	8.36	7.64	58.37	6.98
10	13.21	-3.21	10.30	0.78
6	10.43	-4.43	19.62	1.88
7	4.18	2.82	7.95	1.90
1	6.61	5.61	31.47	4.76
8	5.21	2.79	7.78	1.49
				<b>X<sup>2</sup> = 57.9</b>

From table 4.3, at 5% (0.05) level of significance and 8 degree of freedom, X<sup>2</sup> tabulated = 15.5 and the calculated is 57.9. Since the tabulated value of 15.5 is less

than the calculated value of 57.9, we reject  $H_0$ , 2. Therefore, team-work is significantly affected by cultural differences among employees in organizations in Port Harcourt.

**Hypothesis III**

Ho 3: Cultural differences do not have any significant negative impact on employee productivity in organizations in Port Harcourt.

**Table 5.1: Working with co-workers from different cultural backgrounds has enhanced my performance.**

Options	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
Assotel	2	6	2	5	15	30
Multinet	0	7	1	6	18	32
Daatim	3	6	0	8	14	31
<b>Total</b>	5	19	3	19	47	93

Source: Field Survey, 2013.

**Table 5.2: Calculation of Observed and Expected Frequencies for Hypothesis III**

Options	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
Assotel	10 (8.73)	24 (26.56)	6 (3.15)	10 (13.28)	14 (16.42)	65
Multinet	0 (8.20)	28 (24.92)	3 (2.95)	12 (12.46)	18 (15.41)	61
Daatim	15 (8.06)	24 (24.52)	0 (2.90)	16 (12.26)	14 (15.16)	60
<b>Total</b>	25	76	9	38	47	186

Source: Field Survey, 2013.

**Table 5.3: Chi-Square Test of Hypothesis III**

Ob	Ex	Ob-Ex	$(Ob - Ex)^2$	$\frac{(Ob - Ex)^2}{Ex}$
10	8.73	1.27	1.61	0.18
0	8.20	-8.20	67.24	8.2

15	8.06	6.94	48.16	5.98
24	26.56	-2.56	6.55	0.25
28	24.92	3.08	9.49	0.38
24	24.52	-0.52	0.27	0.01
6	3.15	2.85	8.12	2.58
3	2.95	0.05	0.00	0.00
0	2.90	-2.9	8.41	2.9
10	13.28	-3.28	10.76	0.81
12	12.46	-0.46	0.21	0.02
16	12.26	3.74	13.99	1.14
15	16.42	-1.42	2.02	0.12
18	15.41	2.59	6.71	0.44
14	15.16	-1.16	1.35	0.09
				<b>X<sup>2</sup> = 23.1</b>

From table 5.3, at 5% (0.05) level of significance and 8 degree of freedom, X<sup>2</sup> tabulated is 15.5 and the calculated is 23.1. Since the tabulated value of 15.5 is less than the calculated value of 23.1, we reject H<sub>0</sub>, 3. Therefore, cultural differences do have significant negative impact on employee productivity in organizations in Port Harcourt.

### Discussion of Findings

Based on the analysis on the above chi-square results of 20.14, 57.9, and 23.1 respectively on the three hypotheses tested, it is evident that (i) Cultural differences significantly exist among employees working within organizations in Port Harcourt, Nigeria (ii) Team-work is significantly affected by cultural differences among employees in organizations in Port Harcourt Nigeria and, (iii) Cultural differences have significant negative impact on employee productivity in organizations in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

The findings show that cultural diversity not only involves how employees perceive themselves, but how they perceive other employees. These perceptions affect their interactions. The respondents are not happy that other employees discriminate against them on the basis of their cultural differences. This makes it difficult for them to feel valued and appreciated. Their morale, in terms of their work relationships within the organization is affected and the satisfaction they derive from coming to work depreciates. Cultural differences define individual employees' uniqueness regardless of tribe, culture, beliefs, and values. Therefore, if these differences are not properly managed, they become obstacles to good working relationships, lead to conflict, dysfunction and wasted man-hours. Hence, it is a

source of controversial, counterproductive and conflict-prone work environments in organizations.

The findings also show that as cultural differences create conflicts and misunderstanding among employees, it also creates stress and frustration as employees begin to feel they are placed at the mercy of cultural values and beliefs not their own. This usually results in tension among the employees. As such, when work teams are made up of employees from different cultural background, mistrust and misunderstanding arise especially when members of the team display ethnocentric tendencies. In the organizations sampled, it has created a less inclusive and supportive work environment, poor team building capacities and and relatively weak team work. This must have prompted Lazear (1999) to observe that "ethnic-cultural diversity may affect an organizations performance negatively as it may (i) hinder potential knowledge transfers among workers due to linguistic and cultural barriers, (ii) reduce peer pressure by weakening social ties and trust among them, and (iii) create non-pecuniary disutility of joining or remaining in a demographically diverse firm. Along the same vein, Glaeser et. al. (2000), and Alesina and La Ferrara (2002) emphasized that "people often distrust members of other ethnic groups and tend to prefer interacting in culturally homogeneous communities". Under an organizational atmosphere of distrust, team work becomes difficult to be veritably attained and the productivity of each employee becomes relatively reduced.

### **Implications of Cultural Diversity on Employee Productivity in Work Organizations**

This study has been undertaken to find out the effect of cultural diversity on employee productivity in work organizations in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

McArthur (2010) asserts that "businesses that fail to successfully manage diversity will suffer economic and social consequences. A workplace culture that allows low morale, employee turnover, harassment, discrimination, absenteeism, and disruption to work teams results in a loss of productivity. When individuals are marginalized or isolated by their co-workers and/or managers because of cultural differences, the outcome is also loss of productivity. This study therefore concludes that differences in norms, values, attitudes, practices, philosophy need to be overcome for cultural diversity to become a tool for increasing productivity.

As mentioned earlier, cultural diversity not only involves how people perceive themselves, but how they perceive others. Those perceptions affect their interactions. Ineffective communication of key objectives deriving from cultural differences results in confusion, lack of teamwork propensities, low morale and low productivity. For a wide assortment of employees to function effectively as an organization, human resource managers need to deal effectively with issues such as communication, adaptability and change. Those aspects of cultural diversity which create tension should be revisited so as to formulate policies that will ameliorate their influence on employees.

Cultural diversity will increase significantly in the coming years. This is informed as a result of the effects of globalization, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), competitive and knowledge economy and some other underground problems arising from the effects of the facilitators of globalization; their cause and effect relationship and synergy with work in organization and the economy. Informed organizations have recognized the need for immediate action and are already expanding energy and resources on managing cultural diversity in their workplace now. They recognize that a culturally diverse workforce not only enables an organization better anticipate the needs of its increasingly diverse consumer base but also, is more adaptable to change, more innovative and more open to new ideas. An organization's success and competitiveness depends upon its ability to embrace cultural diversity and realize the benefits. When organizations actively assess their handling of cultural diversity issues, develop and implement cultural diversity plans, multiple benefits become the outcome. This enables organizations to formulate diversity programmes that incorporate the diverseness of each individual employee which in turn induces more commitment and productivity in their respective roles.

"The cohesiveness of a social group has much to do with whether members of such group decide to promote or subvert its corporate interests especially in situations involving highly visible and broadly engaging matters such as leadership, transitions, crises, significant policy shifts, or moral issues" (Friedkin 2004). This decision will in turn determine the extent of their identification with, and participation in the group (Cartwright 1968). Friedkin (2004) further notes "that when contrasted with a group with a low level of cohesiveness, a highly cohesive group will have more members who are strongly motivated by any number of factors (personal or group ambition, ideology or interests) to contribute to the group's welfare, advance its objectives, and participate actively in activities that will procure collective benefits". Some employees pursue narrow, self-serving interests, and maintain poor work relations with other employees within the organization as a result their susceptibilities to the influence of cultural differences. This translates to a lack of commitment to the team-working.

Organizations need differences, need debate, need people to challenge, need honesty but organizations do not need conflict and dis-cohesion arising from cultural diversity. Conflicts arising from cultural factors eat into time, affect employee engagement and morale, and reduce organizational profits as a result of fallen levels in productivity. It is detrimental to organizational goals. This therefore makes pertinent that organizations begin to recognize the economic consequences, when cultural diversity is inadequately managed, to their business in terms of low morale, productivity decrease, etc. This will enable such organizations realize the need to develop effective cultural diversity management strategies and the best ways to implement these strategies.

## **Conclusion**

In a world in which globalization (which more or less subtly infers trans-national economic competition and domination of foreign goods and services) has become the order, organizations in Nigeria have pathetically failed to tap into the benefits of its multicultural workforce to develop and maintain cohesive, efficient, world-class work teams. The impact is felt in the areas of continuously decreasing productivity, falling standards of goods, services and the volume of production. This has created instability in the Nigerian economic sector. As other national economies overcome the challenges of multiculturalism in workforce and produce goods and services for global consumption, the challenges of a culturally diverse workforce will continue to deny Nigerian employees improvements in skills, technology, creativity, innovation, etc. Such improvements would have created opportunities for employees and organizations in Nigeria to acquire the capacities that would have facilitated favourable competition of locally produced goods and services with that of other organizations in other parts of the world.

## **Recommendations**

Employees should also be made to understand that achieving unity despite cultural differences is the responsibility of every member of the organization. In addition, there should be periodic evaluation of the strategies to ensure they are having the desired outcomes. When such strategies are properly and successfully implemented, the positive influence of cultural diversity will manifest and enable members of the organization to build relationships and acknowledge each other regardless of the differences of origin and background.

As employees' behaviour in an organization is usually influenced by the nature of interactions and degree of diversity within the organization, human resources managers and departments therefore should seek to create organizational cultures that not only enhance the cultural diversity of its workforce composition but also boost individual employee performance. The positive influences of cultural diversity will not only enable the organization to increase the scope of its reach, the business will also receive favourable exposure from every sector of the population due to its multicultural make-up and outlook. Programmes for positive influence should always be adjusted to suit the dynamic nature of interactions among people. In addition, organizations should endeavour to establish regular forums and educational programmes in which employees are trained to be sensitive to and appreciate cultural diversity, as well as in maintaining desirable organizational behaviour. It may also be necessary to regularly post motivational quotes and messages of cultural diversity on the organizations notice-boards. When organizations and employees are able to recognize the uniqueness of each employee, recognize that every employee matters and promote inclusion, the productivity benefits become increased.

According to Patrick and Kumar (2012), in managing cultural diversity, organizations must "recognize that people from different backgrounds can bring fresh ideas and perceptions, which can make the way work is done more efficient



and make products and services better... and help organizations to nurture creativity and innovation and thereby, be able to tap hidden capacities for growth and improved competitiveness". This is more so in a world in "which communities [and economies] which were formally distant and unrelated are now continually brought together overtime to make a multifarious whole with an array of many flourishing subcultures" (Wokoma and Iheriohanma 2010:74), economic competition and dominance.

## References

- Alesina, A. and La Ferrara, E. (2002). 'Who Trusts Others' in Journal of Public Economics Vol. 85: pp207-234.
- Akanwa, P. U. and Ohiri, A. U. (2003) Principles of Management and Human Relations. Owerri: Global Press Ltd
- Alugbuo, C. C. (2004) Elements of Management: Revised Edition. Owerri: Stanley George Ltd.
- Bontis, N. (1999) The Knowledge Toolbox: A Review of Tools Available to Measure and Manage Intangible Resources in European Management Journal. Vol. 17 No. 4. pp17-26.
- Cartwright D. (1968). The Nature of Group Cohesiveness in Cartwright, D. and A. Zander (eds). Group Dynamics: Research and Theory. London: Tavistock.
- Friedkin, N. E. (2004). Social Cohesion in Annual Review of Sociology Vol. 30. pp409-425
- Glaeser, E. David I. L. José A. S and Christine L. S. (2000) 'Measuring Trust' in The Quarterly Journal of Economics Vol. 115: pp811-846.
- Hong, L. and Page, S.E. (2001) 'Problem Solving by Heterogeneous Agents' in Journal of Economic Theory Vol. 97: pp123-163.
- Hong, L. and Page, S.E. (2004) 'Groups of Diverse Problem Solvers Can Outperform Groups of High-Ability Problem Solvers' in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences Vol. 101: pp123-139.
- Iheriohanma, E.B.J (2008) 'Linkage between Participatory Management, Managerial Efficiency and Productivity in the Nigerian Civil Service' in IKOGHO: A Multi-Disciplinary Journal. March 2008. Vol 5 No 1. pp 56 – 65.
- Kearns, A. and Forrest, R. (2000). Social Cohesion and Multilevel Urban Governance in Urban Studies Vol. 37, No. 5-6: pp995-1017.

- Lazear, E. P. (1999). 'Globalisation and the Market for Team-Mates' in The Economic Journal Vol. 109: pp15-40.
- Maxwell, J. (1996) Social Dimensions of Economic Growth in Eric John Hanson Memorial Lecture Series. Vol. 8. University of Alberta, Canada.
- McArthur, E. K. (2010) Managing Diversity for Success [Electronic Version] <http://www.linkageinc.com>. Retrieved 04/12/12
- Ogunbameru, O. A. (2004) Organisational Dynamics. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd.
- Olabosipo, I.F, Adeyemi, Y.A and David, A.A. (2004) The Impact of Non-Financial Incentives on Bricklayer Productivity in Nigeria. [Electronic Version] Accessed from [http.wikipedia.com](http://wikipedia.com) on 21/01/10
- Patrick, H. A and Kumar V. R (2012) Managing Workplace Diversity: Issues and Challenges [Electronic Version] Retrieved from <http://sgo.sagepub.com/content/01/10/12>
- Powell, C and Persico, J. E. (1995). My American Journey New York: Ballantine Books.
- Taylor, E. B. (1958) Primitive Culture. New York. Harper and Row.
- Wokoma, C. U. and Iheriohanma, E. B J. (2010) Interaction between Globalization and Organizational Performance in the Third World: Nigeria in Focus in Studies in Sociology of Science Vol. 1, No. 2 pp72-80