

Impact of Age and Gender Diversity on Employee Performance in an Organisation - A Case Study of Zambia Compulsory Standards Agency (ZCSA)

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Abstract- The purpose of the study was to assess the impact of age and gender diversity on employee performance in an organisation. A descriptive research design was adopted with Zambia Compulsory Standards Agency (ZCSA) being the focus organisation which has a total of 103 employees from various units. Stratified and random sampling techniques were used to draw a sample size of 50 respondents from various hierarchical levels. The main data collection instruments were self-administered questionnaires and interview guides. A set of descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, the mean and standard deviation were used to generate tables, bar graphs and pie charts to present the results of the study using SPSS version 18. The key findings of the study were that both age and gender diversity have a bearing on the performance of an employee and ultimately on the organisational output. It was ascertained that employees felt comfortable working with either older or younger employees. Others felt positive about being involved in teams that consist of employees with varying ages as this improved their performance. Furthermore, the study found out that gender diversity has a high predictive power on employee performance. On the other hand, organisations that create an inclusive environment for all employees irrespective of gender and create policies that eliminate discrimination from the workplace can greatly benefit from gender diversity. A significant relationship between gender diversity and work performance has shown that employees like to work with the opposite gender so long as they can carry out their job professionally. The study concluded that age diversity is a very crucial resource for firms that intend to have sustainable workforce, higher production, productivity and profitability.

Index Terms- Age, Diversity, Employee, Gender, Impact, Performance.

I. INTRODUCTION

Globally, human capital is regarded as the organisation's critical input resource in the production process and that it cannot be duplicated by other organisations. The human capital comes from a pool of workforce that brings diverse skills, knowledge, backgrounds, expertise and experiences, all of which

contribute to the overall success of an organisation if well harnessed by the organization through the human resource department or unit. For organisations to attract a broader talent pool of employees, it needs to embrace an organisational culture of workforce diversity. This will lead to an enhanced corporate reputation and strengthened cultural values. According to Childs (2005), workforce diversity is a global workplace and marketplace phenomenon. Therefore, any business that intends to be successful must have a borderless view and an underlying commitment to ensuring that age and gender diversity are part of its day-to-day business conduct. Workforce diversity includes, but is not limited to: age, ethnicity, ancestry, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race, sexual orientation, educational background, geographical location, income, marital status, military experience, religious beliefs, parental status, and work experience (Srivastava and Agarwal, 2012). In 1991, Zambia enacted a new set of laws, which sought to break the culture of gender bias at the workplace in the public sector in order to institutionalise professionalism and positive diversity attributes in these organisations. However, the report published by Mensi-Klarbach et al. (2013) shows that despite the adoption of the legislation by public institutions, the impact of the diversity programs at the organisation level still needed to be identified since these programs are executed deliberately by human resource managers, and may have varied adaptations and unintended consequences.

As a government statutory body established to administer, maintain and ensure compliance to compulsory standards pursuant to *Compulsory Standards Act No. 3 of 2017 of the Laws of Zambia*, the Zambia Compulsory Standards Agency (ZCSA) draws its workforce from diverse backgrounds, professions, experiences and proficiencies.

Consequently, it faces pertinent issues such as demographic changes, increasing number of women joining its workforce, organisational restructuring, and the implementation of the equal opportunity legislation, which require organisations to review their management practices and develop new and creative approaches to people management. Pfeifer and Wagner's (2013) analysis further reveals, for the first time, that the lower level of productivity in organisations with a higher share of female employees does not go hand in hand with a lower level of efficiency in these institutions, *ceteris paribus*. If anything,

efficiency is (slightly) higher in firms with a larger share of female employees. This finding might indicate that a lower productivity of women is (over) compensated by their lower labour costs, which in turn might indicate general labour market discrimination against women or lower reservation wages and less engagement in individual wage bargaining by women. Although previous studies by Cardoso et al. (2011) for Portugal; van Ours and Stoeldraijer (2011) for the Netherlands; Göbel and Zwick (2012) for Germany, Ogendengbe and Rebman (2012) for Nigeria, have analysed firm productivity and the productivity-wage gap, there is no known study especially in Zambia that has explicitly analysed the effects of age and gender composition of the workforce on organisational performance. Therefore, this study was undertaken for the first local evidence for direct links between workforce composition and organisational productivity.

1.1. Problem Statement

Diversity has inherent challenges in terms of conflict among gender and age groups. Conflict arises because of distrust and lack of confidence among group members. A better understanding of the determinants of the effectiveness of teams has, therefore, become increasingly relevant. One of the potential determinants of the effectiveness of a team is its diversity. Gender equality is one of the 17 Global Goals that make up the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as more and more women are being drafted in the workforce while the retirement age in Zambia has been moved from 55 years to 65 years under the Statutory Instrument (SI) Number 63 of 2014. Currently, each year, new young workers are entering the workforce while few old ones are retiring. This denotes a huge shift in the workforce, often resulting in showcasing key distinctions between the different generations as well as different perceptions among each group. By 2025, millennials will make up 75% of the workforce, and they are changing the work culture (Gupta, 2013). Employees from other generations may have difficulties adapting to changes in the workplace and the work culture that the younger generation are bringing about. In larger organisations, there are more diversified age groups, from teenagers to senior citizens (Göbel and Zwick, 2012). As a result, cliques and social circles are formed, and some workers are isolated from the team thereby affecting individual performance. There may also be times that workers from different generations may disagree on how things should be done.

To maintain teamwork and collaboration by creating an open communication culture within an establishment to help bridge the gap between generations is a daunting task for any organisation. From literature review (Ozemenbhoya et al., 2012; van Ours and Stoeldraijer, 2011), it was discovered that only very few studies on workforce diversity and its relative impact had been conducted in Africa, precisely Zambia. Few of such studies that exist have failed to provide detailed examination of the impact of workforce diversity on employee performance. For instance, Mbilima (2016) reports that, "women represent 27 per cent of the urban utilities workforce, a comparably high figure, but until recently it was difficult to tell whether women truly participated in decision making to gauge their impact because this was not reported on." Emphasis was usually put on the number of women in the sector although this too used not to be included in the regular reports produced on the sector. Without such information, assessing the results of various gender mainstreaming activities

will continue to be challenging. Consequently, NWASCO – the Zambian regulator – took the progressive step to report on female participation in water utility companies. The 2015 Urban and Peri-urban Sector Water Supply and Sanitation Sector report found that, of the total staff in the sector, 83 per cent were men and 17 per cent were women. Therefore, this study seeks to examine empirically and theoretically the concept of workforce diversity in terms of age and gender and its impact on employee performance at ZCSA.

1.2. Study Objectives

1.2.1. Main Objective

To assess the impact of age and gender diversity on employee performance in an organisation.

1.2.2. Specific Objectives

- (i) To establish the impact of age diversity on the performance of an employee.
- (ii) To ascertain the impact of gender diversity on the performance of an employee.
- (iii) To determine to what extent workforce diversity influences organisational performance.

II. THEORETICAL REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Impact of Age Diversity on Employee Performance

Gupta (2013) had shown that there was no distinct connection between age and work performance. Performance decline is more likely due to skills obsolescence than declining mental capabilities. It is observed from many studies that older employees are as productive and skilled as the young. The decline in work performance with age if any can be compensated by superior performance in other areas, such as an individual's job experience and problem-solving skills (Tempest et al., 2002). There were also positive stereotypes about old workers that they were seen as being more dependable, experienced (Finkelstein et al., 2000) and wiser (Kogan and Shelton, 1960) than younger workers. Thus, the cost of age heterogeneity may be compensated with its potential benefits. By having employees of different ages, a firm can form and maintain better relationships with customers from different age groups. A *heterogeneous* age group of employees would, therefore, be more productive than a homogeneous age group (Williams and O'Reilly, 1998; Zenger and Lawrence, 1989). Innovative and creative tasks are associated with more complex problem-solving requirements and low levels of standardisation. This is where the benefits of heterogeneous competencies may outweigh the losses due to standard communication problems. The conflicts can lead to enhanced group discussion, a better analysis and better solutions for challenges and problems. Hence, age heterogeneity may increase performance in creative tasks (Richard and Shelor, 2002). In accordance with this rationale, Gupta (2013) found that a positive effect of age heterogeneity on organisational productivity for firms engaged in problem solving tasks. Another benefit of greater age diversity is that it tends to counteract the dominance of one particular age group and its organisational problems. A homogeneous age group might reduce the career options and promotion based incentives in the organisation and hence would

increase the turnover of employees. Thus, age heterogeneity is also necessary for an efficient in-house distribution of implicit knowledge and for increase of productivity due to promotion based incentives (Pelled et al., 1999).

However, Lazear (1999) found out that the advantages of age diversity can be gained only when organisations overcome the additional communication costs and issues related to emotional conflicts between them. Bacharach et al. (2009) argued that age heterogeneity can negatively affect employee productivity due to differences in values and preferences of distinct age groups. The generation gap leads to frequent conflicts between the workforce (Lau and Murnighan, 2005; Pitcher and Smith, 2001). Crystalline intelligence (wisdom) can be substantially improved through work and life experience and may, therefore, increase with age. Wisdom continuously increases until the age of 50 and remains stable for the age of 70 to 75 and then starts declining (Baltes et al., 2005). Elderly people with the help of their wisdom make more realistic judgments about situations and scenarios than younger people (Charness and Villeval, 2007). Thus, ageing negatively impacts cognitive speed but positively influences experience and wisdom (Baltes et al., 2005; Sternberg and Grigorenko, 2005). Spitz-Oener (2006) states that wisdom does not decline with age and older workers generally have a comparative advantage over younger workers in judicial tasks. The wide research conducted on medical, psychological and economic fields suggests that old and young employees possess different skills and abilities (Johnson, 2005; Skirbekk, 2005). The competencies and capabilities of old and young employees vary depending on their occupational field and activity. It can generally be assumed that depending on the type of task, individual productivity declines with age. Jehn et al. (1999) had shown that the differences in age, race and gender may have become less relevant and less important over time as group members cooperated with each other and spent a substantial amount of time performing together in specific contexts. It is clear that diverse group members are given sufficient time to embrace and capitalise on their differences. Unlike gender diversity, organisations rarely undertake initiatives to increase age diversity. Traditional age distributions within organisational structures (younger at the bottom and older in the middle and top) were derived from hiring employees at a young age and retaining them through most of their working life.

Furthermore, Childs (2005) had revealed that there was no distinct relationship found between age diversity and work performance. It has been observed from numerous studies that more old employees are as productive, profitable and skilful as young ones. Therefore, a heterogeneous age group of employees would be more creative, dynamic and gainful than a homogeneous age group (Williams and O'Reilly, 1998). Complimentarily effects emerge when collaboration in a group enables individuals to be more productive than when working on their own. Hence, the benefits of age heterogeneity are based on additional productivity effects that arise due to interaction among individuals of different ages with differing skill profiles, differing perspectives and perhaps also different personality traits.

2.1. Impact of Gender Diversity on Employee Performance

Workforce gender diversity is increasing in countries all over the world (International Labour Office, 2007). For example,

women's representation in the United States civilian labour force has increased from 29.4 percent in 1950 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1970) to 46.3 percent in 2006 (U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2007). Similarly, women's representation in the Australian labour force has increased from 22.9 percent in 1954 (Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1958) to 46.1 percent in 2006 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006). The increase in workforce gender diversity has attracted the attention of both researchers and practitioners. In particular, a question arises whether the gender composition in an organisation's workforce will affect individual, group, or organisational level performance. In the early 1990s, both scholars and practitioners were generally optimistic about the effects of workforce diversity on performance. For example, Cox and Blake (1991) argued that diversity can be a source of competitive advantage. However, theories and empirical research thus far suggest that diversity can lead to either positive or negative outcomes. The resource-based view of the firm (Barney, 1991) suggests a positive diversity-performance relationship, whereas social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978) suggests a negative diversity-performance relationship.

Further, empirical research has found inconsistent results suggesting that diversity can be either good or bad for businesses (Jackson and Joshi, 2004; Svyantek and Bott, 2004). For instance, Svyantek and Bott reviewed nine diversity studies (published during 1989-2003) that investigated the gender diversity-performance relationship. Out of the nine studies, four found no main effects, two found positive effects, two found negative effects, and one found a nonlinear effect. The body of literature on diversity sends a confusing message to practitioners on whether gender diversity is good for businesses or not. The mixed evidence suggests the value of focusing on competing predictions (Armstrong et al., 2001), including nonlinear predictions (Gupta, 2013), and of considering the effect of context on the diversity-performance relationship (Joshi and Jackson, 2003). Competing predictions are useful when 'prior knowledge leads to two or more reasonable explanations' (Armstrong et al., 2001:175). Moreover, Joshi and Jackson advised scholars to describe their studies' contexts in detail to enable cross-study comparisons that might explain inconsistent results. Studying the moderating effect of context might help explain inconsistencies in past research and achieve a 'more precise and specific understanding' of the primary gender diversity-performance relationship (Gupta, 2013).

Mwatumwa (2016) argues that gender diversity is positively linked to employee and organisational performance. This concurs with Kyalo (2015) who used a resource-based view of a firm, stating that gender diversity at the management and organisational levels can provide a firm with better competitive advantage. However, Kirton and Greene (2015) argued that most organisations do not realise these benefits as gender-based imbalances still persist in organisations. According to Nishii (2013), most cultures around the world still adhere to the notion that the world is dominated by men. As such, the corporate world holds the same belief and organisations thus prefer to hire men compared to women because men are perceived to have better performance and ability to manage their jobs and women are stereotyped against feminine characteristics (Nishii, 2013). Kirton and Green (2015), however, stated that providing equal employment opportunities for women is important to improve employee performance in organisations. At the Malaysian airline,

Eugene et al. (2011) found out that there was a significant positive relationship between gender diversity and employee performance. Furthermore, Eugene and co-authors found out that a 10% increase of women in Airline industry for the past five decades resulted in an increase in productivity and GDP by 5% and 1%, respectively.

According to Catalyst (2004) public sector study, gender diversity gave positive effects on organisational performance, but these positive effects may be based on a number of factors. It is, therefore, necessary to examine the relationship between gender diversity and performance of public sector organisations. For example, a study of gender-diverse and same-gender groups performing a radio assembly task revealed no performance differences between the two groups (Gupta, 2013). In this case, the nature of the task (simple and mostly physical) may be a relevant factor in the research of the latter. A more cognitive task might yield different results. These types of diversity include gender, personality and ability. Measures of performance included some combination of the quality, quantity and accuracy of teamwork. Although none of these types of diversity appeared to have significant direct effects on workforce performance, when the task to be performed is rated as highly difficult (complex), significant performance advantages may occur for the diverse groups compared to the homogeneous groups hence posing a relationship between workforce diversity and organisational performance. The study established that relations oriented workforce diversity influence performance in a way that some workers tend to work effectively with colleagues with whom they share the same attributes hence supporting the assertion by Byrne (1971) that people are attracted by people of the same social and cultural attributes.

2.1. Extent of Workforce Diversity Influence on Organisational Performance

According to Anderson and Metcalf (2003) social category diversity is linked to differences in cultures and demographic attributes of employees. These differences can be in age, ethnicity, gender and places of origin. This diversity is associated with a mix of viewpoints, opinions and experiences at the workplace. Gender and age diversity has been associated with enhanced business performance through increased employee satisfaction and overall firm productivity which in return reduces labour costs. A productive employee on the other hand, delivers results through increased sales, costs savings, improving their job efficiency which feed to the overall bottom line results for an organisation. Employees' age diversity on the other hand is an excellent source of organisation learning that promotes innovativeness which results in new and better products and services in the market place and efficient business processes that impact the bottom line (Odhiambo, 2014). On the other hand, companies which promote gender diversity earn both professional acclaim today complemented with increased employee and customer's loyalty.

They also attract a large number of job applicants, which means they have the choice of hiring the best employees in the market which becomes a source of competitive advantage. Increased customer satisfaction is associated with an improved bottom line since customers always reward such organisations with repeat business and hence sustained revenue growth (Kochan et al., 2003).

2.2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework explains theories which are relevant to a particular research. A theory is a system of interconnected ideas that condense and organise knowledge about the world (Gupta, 2013). In this research, the theory which was adopted is the *information processing theory*.

Information-Processing and Decision-making Theory

Gruenfeld and Neale (2006) provide a theoretical approach to describe the effects of work diversity through a framework of information and decision-making. This perspective shows how heterogeneity within a group affects the exchange of information and the ability of decision making. This theory demonstrates the potential advantages of heterogeneous groups. The framework presents that members of diverse groups have access to a greater variety of information using more contacts and networks outside the group than homogeneous team members would do. Heterogeneous groups can be simultaneously classified as in-group or out-group members based on multiple dimensions (Hewstone et al., 2002). Groups where members of another subgroup have different functional backgrounds would be consistent with the fact that they also have different levels of education and work experiences. Because of subgroup formation, members are aware of their differences and expect to be different along informational lines. This elicits less uncertain and ambiguous environments in which members are more likely to accept their informational differences and cooperate (Rink and Ellemers, 2006).

2.3. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework represents the basis of the research and it provides the interrelationships or linkages between the concepts, variables or constructs of the study. This framework results into the development of a conceptual model that tries to address the research problem and research questions of the study and provides the required answers. According to Gupta (2013), the conceptual framework attempts to explain either graphically or in narrative form the main things to be studied (i.e., key factors, constructs or variables and the presumed relationship among them). **Figure 1.0** below depicts the relationship between workforce diversity (age and gender) and organisational performance.

Independent Variables

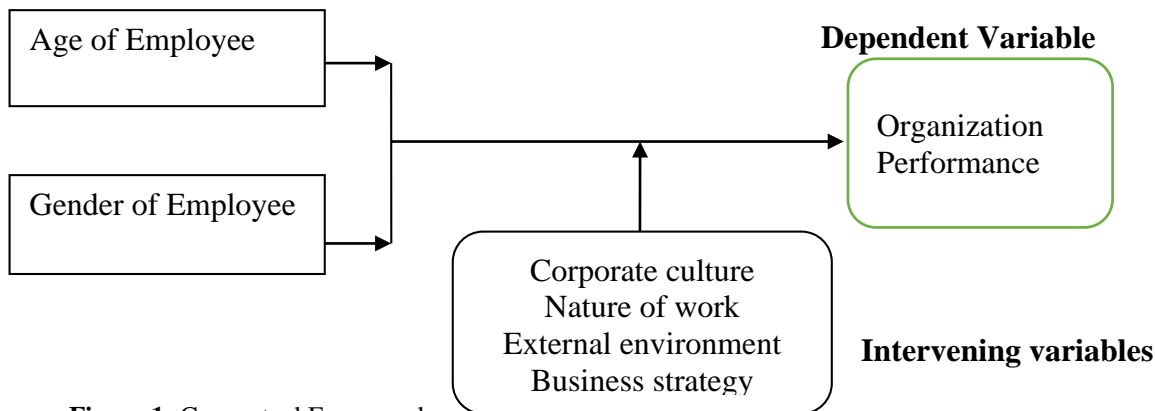


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: Author's Construction (2019)

Independent Variable - The independent variables are the different forms of workforce diversity; in this case age and gender. These dimensions affect organisational performance either positively or negatively, hence, they are critical success factors.

Intervening variables - An intervening variable is a hypothetical variable used to explain causal links between other variables. Intervening variables cannot be observed in an experiment (that's why they are hypothetical). Intervening variables are hypothetical constructs like corporate culture, nature of work, external environment or business strategy. As they are not "real" variables, one major limitation is that they cannot be measured. It is, therefore, impossible to quantify how much of the experimental results are due to the independent variables, and how much are due to each of the intervening variables.

Dependable Variable - Several single factors acting individually have a collective impact on organisational performance at ZCSA. The success of any objective depends on the outcomes from the very many input or support activities. According to Gupta (2013), workforce diversity has a profound effect on organisational performance. Hence, organisational performance is the dependent variable in this model.

III. METHODOLOGY

study used a case study approach incorporating qualitative and quantitative paradigms. A descriptive research design was adopted, with Zambia Compulsory Standards Agency (ZCSA) being the focus organisation. The target population comprised a total of 103 employees from various units of the institution. Stratified random sampling technique was used to draw a sample size of 50 respondents from various hierarchical levels covering junior, middle and senior management staff with ratings being done via a Likert scale. The main data collection instruments were an open and close-ended self-administered questionnaires and interview guides. A set of descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, the mean and standard deviation were

used to generate tables, bar graphs and pie charts to present the results of the study using SPSS version 18.

IV. FINDINGS - ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

2.2. Impact of Age Diversity on Employee Performance

The findings on the impact of age diversity on the performance of the employee at ZCSA using the Likert scale of five where: 5-Strongly; 4-Agree; 3-Not Sure; 2-Disagree; and 1-Strongly Disagree, evidently revealed that the respondents were in agreement that the expertise of young employees with high tech tools helps older employees to improve their knowledge on latest technologies as an influencing factor on employee and organisational performance. The individual statements standard deviations were close indicating low variations among the respondents' responses. This indicates that the respondents perceived that overall age diversity has a significant influence on employee performance. The respondents were neutral on the aspect that the risk taken by younger employees contributed to the success of the team with 3.48 as mean, though they strongly agreed on the fact that the mentoring by older employees benefited young employees in acquiring job skills at 4.34 as mean. However, Gupta (2013) shows that there was no distinct connection between age and work performance. Performance decline is more likely due to skills obsolescence than declining mental capabilities. It is observed from many studies that older employees are as productive and skilled as the young. The decline in work performance with age if any can be compensated by superior performance in other areas, such as an individual's job experience and problem-solving skills (Tempest et al., 2002).

The respondents were also in strong agreement that older employees mitigated the friction among younger employees in the team and promoted team cohesiveness by a mean of 3.7 but they were neutral on the statement that there was no emotional conflicts and anxiety within the team due to status difference between young and old employees by a mean of 3.0. The respondents also remained neutral on the aspect that they did not experience stress in the previous 12 months due to age diversity issues in their work

place as indicated by a mean of 3.34. The majority respondents to a certain extent supported the notion that the organisation had a balanced representation of employees from different age groups as symbolised by a mean of 3.64 which this was in contrast to the study findings which showed the age group of 30-39 years at 66% as against 6% for the 20-29 years bracket. However, this may have been as a result of a sampling error which can be attributed to the selection technique. The respondents were somewhat in agreement on age diversity in the company having led to increased innovation by a mean of 3.56 implying that a relatively good number of responses were in agreement to the above claim.

2.1. Effects of Gender Diversity on Employee Performance in an Organisation

On the question of how gender diversity affects employee performance, the Likert scale of five points was used where: 5-Strongly Agree; 4-Agree; 3-Not Sure; 2-Disagree; 1-Strongly Disagree. A mean of 3.14 was scored which indicated that the respondents were neutral on the effects of gender diversity indicators as an influencing factor on organisation performance. From the standard deviation of 1.05, it was evident that the individual statements' standard deviations are close indicating low variations among the respondents' responses. This shows that respondents were not sure whether gender diversity was an important factor that affected organisational performance. Further, empirical research has found inconsistent results suggesting that diversity can be either good or bad for businesses (Jackson and Joshi, 2004; Svyantek and Bott, 2004). The body of literature on diversity sends a confusing message to practitioners on whether gender diversity is good for businesses or not. The mixed evidence suggests the value of focusing on competing predictions (Armstrong et al., 2001), including nonlinear predictions (Gupta, 2013), and of considering the effect of context on the diversity-performance relationship (Joshi and Jackson, 2003).

Mwatumwa (2016) argues that gender diversity is positively linked to employee and organisational performance. This concurs with Kyalo (2013) who used a resource based-view of a firm, stating that gender diversity at the management and organisational levels can provide a firm with better competitive advantage. However, Kirton and Greene (2015) argued that most organisations do not realise these benefits as gender-based imbalances still persist in organisations. The respondents were also somewhat not sure that ZCSA had an equal gender representation as scored by the mean of 2.9. This is evidenced by the sampled respondents who were represented by males at 70% and females at 30% from the sample size of 50. Gender-based differences in the organisation are fortified and justified by generalisations and preferences that describe positive attributes and hence a higher obvious quality to the males (Cunningham, 2008). In other words, organisations have a preference to contract male workforce compared to female since they should have better performance and abilities to manage their jobs. While respondents were not sure whether gender diversity in the company had increased employee satisfaction or not as shown by the mean of 3.08, they also remained neutral on the aspect of gender diversity having led to improved customer compliance and loyalty as substantiated by the mean of 3.14.

According to Selveraj (2015), gender diversity was found to be positively affecting employee performance even though it

was not an area of concern in the organisation studied. There was also neutrality among respondents that gender diversity programmes had increased the number of job applicants of either gender as scored by the mean score of 3.46. This may imply that the gender diversity programmes could still be new in the organisation as the current gender distribution does not support this claim.

2.2. Extent to which Workforce Diversity Influences on Organisational Performance

The third and final objective of the study was to determine to what extent workforce diversity influenced organisational performance. The investigation also bordered on a Likert scale of one to five where: 5-Strongly Agree; 4-Agree; 3-Not Sure; 2-Disagree; 1-Strongly Disagree. The results came out with a data mean of 3.58, which evidenced that the respondents were somehow in agreement that workforce diversity influences organisational performance. From the standard deviation of 0.9, it was evident that the individual statements' standard deviations were close indicating low variations among the respondents' responses. As for the individual statements' mean, respondents were agreed on the fact that workforce diversity had enhanced employee efficiency as it had a mean of 3.82 while respondents were not sure whether workforce diversity had reduced labour costs as the rating had a mean of 3.30 with a standard deviation of 1.05. Respondents were agreed on the fact that workforce diversity had improved employee performance as it had a mean of 3.62 and standard deviation of 0.85.

V. DISCUSSION

The study has unequivocally revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between age diversity and employee performance of employees of ZCSA. This is in line with the findings of Wegge et al. (2008). From the responses gathered, employees indicated that they felt comfortable working with either older or younger employees. Others felt positive about being involved in teams that consist of employees with varying ages as this improves their performance. However, this finding disagrees with the result of Weiliang et al. (2011). A negative effect of age diversity and employee performance could be as a result of the assumption that older employees may be less efficient and effective because of deteriorating strength due to age (Schlick et al., 2013). Nonetheless, older employees are also believed to show higher level of performance due to the reservoir of knowledge and experience gained over the years. Further, the younger employees based on the current generation are open to technology and new ways of carrying out their jobs easily and quickly while older employees may be less effective due to deteriorating strength owing to age. Moreover, age diversity within the organisation allows the technologically savvy younger employees to share their technical competencies with the older generation within the firm. The older workforce on the hand, bestow on the younger workforce with the business standard and operation procedures that add to the sustenance of productivity and performance within the organisation. Additionally, for organisations that either want to achieve or retain a competitive advantage, age diversity allows for opportunities for creativity and innovation that precipitate product and service enhancements. Hence, having different age

groups in the workplace can affect performance either positively or negatively and the HR department needs to carefully craft policies aimed at maximising the returns of organizations based on this diversity praxis.

On the other hand, the study revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between gender diversity and employee performance of employees of ZCSA. From the survey, most of the respondents agreed that the organisation does not discriminate when it comes to employing different gender into the organisation and there is equal opportunity for females to develop on their career. This shows that the management at ZCSA adhere to the diversity policies and implements best practices. This study does not support the claim of defuse Arokiasany (2013) that organisational leaders prefer to hire more male employees than female because it is believed that the male have the capacity to be highly effective than the female employees. Based on the result of the data analysed herein and the study hypothesis tested, it is evident that gender diversity has a significant positive relationship with employee performance. This result is in line with the findings of Weiliang et al. (2011); Baligasima (2013); and Raaza-Naqvi et al. (2013). However, negative attitudes like stereotype, prejudice, discrimination and sexual harassment on and against opposite gender can account for the negative effect of gender diversity on employee performance. This can account for inconsistencies in employee performance. Besides, organisations that create an inclusive environment for all employees irrespective of gender and create policies that eliminate discrimination from the workplace can benefit from gender diversity (Milliken and Martins, 1996). A significant relationship between gender diversity and work performance could also mean that some employees like to work with opposite gender so long as they can carry out their job professionally.

Over and above, the study established that respondents agreed that employee diversity affects employee satisfaction and labour costs, employee quality and performance with the most significant impact being on employee quality and performance in terms of diverse skills, creativity, problem-solving and flexibility and customer satisfaction. This is in agreement with Cox's (2001) study findings. The respondents suggested ways through which the organisation could improve employee diversity in order to improve their organisation performance. According to the findings, some of the respondents indicated that enhancing gender diversity would in turn enhance employee diversity as a prerequisite for suitable performance. It was also argued that, with declining homogeneity in the employee, it has become crucial for organisations to develop equal opportunities and diversity management policies to retain the skills of employees with diverse backgrounds in order to protect their competitive position in the marketplace (Shaw, 2003; Gilbert and Ivancevich, 2000).

VI. CONCLUSION

The study findings demonstrate that age diversity is a very crucial resource for organisations that intend to maintain a sustainable workforce in order to enhance the performance and sustainability. For most organisations, age diversity facilitates the development of a leadership pipeline within the firm as younger employees are available for training by the aged employees on organisational processes. By allowing the establishment of a

leadership pipeline, age diversity not only facilitates the creation of a pool of competent employees but allows the organisation to sustain its way of doing business including "best practices." On the other hand, gender diversity is a vital factor for organisational performance. This is because it has both internal and external values that facilitate organisational performance. Achieving gender diversity is not only important because it is the right thing to do in society in which gender equality is a major issue, but it also has the potential to facilitate the attainment of internal and external corporate objectives. The value of gender diversity for intra-organisational decision-making and problem solving has been determined by several studies. The value of boardroom gender diversity in the corporate decision-making and the determination of a sustainable corporate strategy have also been found to be true. Finally, the value of workforce gender diversity for creativity and innovativeness, quality of management, services and products has also been established in some studies. The inclusion of both women and men in the boardroom and management of the organisation has also been found to add to corporate reputation and job satisfaction, all of which are crucial for their value to overall corporate performance. According to the study findings, the null hypotheses are rejected and alternative hypotheses accepted while stating that age and gender have a significant positive impact on employee performance in an organisation and should be embraced as such.

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