## TRANSFORMATIVE HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND THEIR ROLES IN PROMOTING GENDER DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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# Abstract

The study explored the roles of transformative human resources management practices in promoting gender diversity and inclusivity in Nigerian Universities. Three specific purposes were stated and three research questions were raised. A descriptive survey research design was used to achieve the purpose of the study. Disproportionate stratified random samples were used to gather data from a sample of 444 participants from four universities in North-East Nigeria. A four-point Likert 'type' scale questionnaire used as the data collection tool. Three specialists in educational administration and measurement and evaluation ensured the content validity of the instrument. Cronbach's alphamethod was used to calculate the internal consistencies of the items in the instrument, which yielded a coefficient value of 0.75 and 0.86. The data collected from the respondents was analysed using mean and standard deviation. The result showed that there was a deficiency of allencompassing strategies for gender equality in hiring, training, performance management, and work-life balance efforts. Compared to men, the result revealed a lower presence or participation of women in administrative and leadership positions. The implication of the result is that while gender sensitization training is useful in fostering better attitudes and behaviours, its full benefits depend on institutional culture change. The authors recommended, among others, that mentorship initiatives, gender-sensitive training, and open performance reviews should be introduced in order to reduce gender gaps and promote a transformative culture.

Keywords: Cultural Norms, Gender Diversity, HRM Practices, Inclusive Policies, Training Initiatives.

# Introduction

Resources are categorized into three forms in established organizations, namely: financial resources, human resources, and physical resources. According to Stone-Romero, Alvarez and Thompson (2009), human resources are the organization's most important resource out of the three. Similarly, Chijoke and Chinedu (2015) contended that employees are the key resource and that their performance on the job is essential for the achievement of the organizational goals. Sriviboon and



Jermsittiparsert (2019) claimed that an effective job performance is significantly influenced by employees' inputs. For instance, various scholars have agreed that employee's training, engagement, gender diversity and inclusivity, and reward systems significantly influenced job performance (Salah, 2016; Garavan, McCathy&Carbery, 2020; Nassary, 2018; Afroz, 2018; Reijseger, Peeters, Taris&Schaufeli, 2017). Similarly, transformative actions in the areas of organizational design and policies, training and development, inclusive cultural norms amount to provision of services that improve employees' well-being irrespective of its gender resistivity (Onwuchekwa, Onwuzuligbo&Ifeanyi, 2019; Sibani, 2017; Ekpe, et al. 2014).

Diversity is a practice in which employees, whether male or female from diverse origins are given equal opportunities and benefits and are not excluded. Accordingly, gender diversity refers to the presence of a variety of gender identities inside an organization (Irini& Borza, 2020). Therefore, gender diversity in a workplace can be seen as a proper balance between male and female personnel(Onwuchekwa, et al. 2019). Contrarily, inclusivity aims to promote a culture in which everyone, regardless of gender, is treated with respect and dignity(Phiri, et al. 2022). By implication, diversity and inclusion must be taken into consideration while managing human resources in any academic institution due to their impact on the effectiveness in achieving the goals of the organization. Therefore, the success of Nigerian academic institutions depends on the practice of diversity and inclusivity, which manifests themselves in various ways (c.f. Inegbedion, Sunday, Asaleye, Lawal&Adebanji, 2020; Fagbe, Fagbe&Folorunso-Ako, 2019; Akobo, 2016). For instance, academic institutions that prioritize gender diversity and inclusivity practices have higher possibility of achieving their set goals and objectives (Sharma, et al. 2016).

Transformative human resources management (HRM) practices necessary to promote gender diversity and inclusivity in organizations, especially in academic institutions, for exampleuniversities. By giving workers a competitive edge, recognizing individual differences will increase effectiveness in achieving organizational goals and objective (Green, et al. 2019). According to Gormley, Gupta, Matsa, Mortal and Yang (2023), gender diversity and inclusivity have a significant impact on an organization's capacity for innovation, creativity, and efficiency. Collaboration among employees from diverse backgrounds and genders can lead to ground-revolutionary research and useful answers to problems (Lazar, Zbuchea&Pînzaru, 2023). The promotion of a variety of perspectives and experiences is another benefit of gender diversity and inclusivitywhich, in turn, enhances decision-making in the workplace (Cicchiello, Fellegara, Kazemikhasragh&Monferrà, 2021). However, for academic institutions to be vibrant, just, and intellectually competitive, gender diversity and inclusiveness are highly essential. Universities as a representative of academic institutions can promote academic achievement and social growth as well as better preparing their staff members for the demands of a diverse and linked society by upholding these ideals.

Universities face challenges in managing gender diversity due to diverse demographics, backgrounds, and perspectives. Individualistic conduct and discrimination pose significant treats to universities (Fagbe, et al. 2019; Nwokpoku, Chibuzor& Oliver, 2017). HRM teams must address these issues, which can stem frommanagers or employees. The inability of employees to work cohesively can negatively impact their job performance and, in turn, can contribute to diversity failure (Inegbedion, et al. 2020).Human resource management should concentrate on transformative HRM practices, such as inclusive policies, training, and cultural norms,In order to address gender diversity and inclusion challenges in Nigerian universities. To address marginalization and prejudice,



standards, strategic action plans, and policies should be created and formulated (Fagbe, et al. 2019). These efforts should encourage workforce inclusivity and diversity, much like in industrialized nations (Kung, et al. 2020). Gender training, planning training, analysis training, awareness training, and policymaker training, are essential for addressing gender-related workplace disperities (Bolivar, et al. 2019; Alonso, 2017; Onday, 2016). Gender training involves job training, staff development, and promotion to maintain a diverse workforce. Deeply rooted cultural norms and biases must be changed over time, which calls for institutional and community suppor (Worlu&Nwachukwu, 2015). The ideas, attitudes, and behaviours of individuals regarding gender diversity and inclusivity in Nigerian academic institutions could be significantly impacted by transformative HRM practices initiatives via gender sensitization training and policy development programmes. This study was necessary due to the inclination of transformative HRM practices order to address all gender-related issues, encourage a more inclusive culture, and provide anti-bias, diversity and inclusion training to all members.

## **Purpose of the Purpose**

The purpose of this study isto examine the roles of transformative HRM practices in promoting gender diversity and inclusivity in Nigerian Universities. Specifically, the study seeks to examine:

- 1. the level of HRM practices in promoting gender diversity and inclusivity in Nigerian universities.
- 2. the current state of gender diversity and inclusivity in Nigerian universities across faculties, administrative positions and academic disciplines.
- 3. the ways inclusive policies, training and cultural norms promote gender diversity and inclusivity in Nigerian universities.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study.

*Research Question 1:* What is the level of HRM practices in promoting gender diversity and inclusivity in Nigerian universities?

*Research Question 2:* What is the current state of gender diversity and inclusivity in Nigerian universities across faculties, administrative positions and academic disciplines?

*Research Question 3:* What are the ways inclusive policies, training and cultural norms promote gender diversity and inclusivity in Nigerian universities?

# Methods

# **Research Design**

This study employed a descriptive survey research design. A descriptive survey research design helps to investigate the views, beliefs, and experiences of respondents as related to gender diversity, inclusion policies, and cultural norms in the six North-East States of Nigeria.

#### **Participants and Sampling Procedure**

A disproportionate stratified random sampling technique was utilized to gather data from a wider sample of 444 participants. This method ensured representation from various strata within the population (e.g., state, gender) to capture a broader range of perspectives.

#### **Data Collection Instruments**

Three research instruments were used for data collection. Each instrument consisted of structured questions with four response options, namely: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), ranging from 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively.

#### Validation and Reliability of Instruments

Content validity of the instruments was established through face validity by three experts. To determine the reliability, Cronbach's alpha method was used to calculate the data collected from the respondents via a pilot test of 24 participants. The result yielded coefficient values of 0.75, 0.82, and 0.86 for the three instruments, which further indicated high internal consistency, and supporting the instruments' suitability for data collection.

### **Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics (for example, mean and standard deviation) were employed to analyse the data collected from the respondents. Mean were used to answer each of the research questions. Standard deviations were used to measure the dispersion of responses around the mean. The interpretation of mean scores followed the decision criteria of Strongly Agreed (3.50-4.00); Agreed (2.50-3.49); Disagreed (1.50-2.49); and Strongly Disagreed (1.00-1.49). These cut-off points provided a framework for interpreting the level of agreement or disagreement with the survey statements.

### Result

*Research Question 1:* What is the level of HRM practices in promoting gender diversity and inclusivity in Nigerian universities?

Table 1: Mean scores and standard deviation of the level of HRM practices in promoting
gender diversity and inclusivity in Nigerian universities.

SN	Level of HRM practices in promoting gender diversity and inclusivity	$\overline{X_{\mathrm{F}}}$	$\overline{X_P}$	XA	$\overline{X_G}$	SD	Remarks
1	The HR department actively encourages employees to report gender-related issues.	3.72	3.64	3.65	3.66	0.65	SA
2	HRM practices in my organization promote diversity.	3.65	3.58	3.68	3.64	0.50	SA
3	Performance evaluations consider both individual contributions and the promotion of gender diversity.	3.76	3.70	3.69	3.71	0.47	SA
4	Mentorship programs in my organization actively support gender diversity.	3.69	3.46	3.37	3.50	0.52	SA
5	Professional development opportunities are equally accessible for all genders.	3.58	3.30	3.32	3.40	0.48	А
6	Performance evaluations in my organization	3.54	3.56	3.55	3.55	0.52	SA

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are free from gender bias.

7	The institutions provide adequate resources for gender diversity and inclusivity.	3.63	3.69	3.59	3.62	0.60	SA
8	Develop succinct statement of how HR delivers its services.	3.57	3.57	3.51	3.54	0.49	SA
9	Gender diversity goals and initiatives are clearly communicated to all employees.	3.75	3.77	3.71	3.74	0.53	SA
10	Employees are aware of the opportunities available for addressing gender-related issues.	3.85	3.75	3.55	3.71	0.47	SA
11	Highlight the career development of the employees irrespective of gender.	3.54	3.46	3.48	3.49	0.52	А
12	Consult departmental heads and human resource managers prior to recruitment to avoid gender bias.	3.41	3.34	3.37	3.37	0.59	SA
13	Include HRM to form a recruitment/selection committee.	3.71	3.63	3.68	3.67	0.46	SA
	Cluster Summary	3.62	3.56	3.54	3.57	0.51	SA

**Note.**  $\overline{X_F}$  = Mean of Fac. members;  $X_P$  = Mean of Per. staff;  $X_A$  = Mean of Admin,  $X_G$  = Grand Mean, SD = Standard Deviation; SA = Strongly Agreed, A= Agreed, n= Faculty members = 228; Personnel Staff = 36; Administrators = 180.

Table 1 showed that respondents strongly agreed that 10 out of 13 items can be transformed to promote gender diversity and inclusivity in Nigerian universities through HRM practices. However, the remaining 3 items, 5, 11, and 12, had grand mean values within the boundary limit of 2.50 - 3.49, indicating their acceptance. Table 1 also showed a grand mean of 3.57, indicating strong agreement among respondents on how HRM practices can promote gender diversity and inclusivity in Nigerian universities, with standard deviation values ranging from 0.46 to 0.65.

*Research Question 2:* What is the current state of gender diversity and inclusivity in Nigerian universities across faculties, administrative positions and academic disciplines?

Table 2: Mean scores and standard deviation of the current state of gender diversity and inclusivity in Nigerian universities across faculties, administrative positions and academic disciplines.

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S/N	Current state of gender diversity and inclusivity in Nigerian universities	$\overline{X_F}$	$\overline{X_P}$	$\overline{X_A}$	$\overline{X_G}$	SD	Remarks
1	Gender diversity is not adequately represented across various academic disciplines in our	3.34	3.35	3.36	3.35	0.68	A
2	university. Gender diversity is not actively promoted in administrative positions.	3.35	3.30	3.29	3.30	0.50	А
3	Women are underrepresented in faculty positions.	3.58	3.50	3.51	3.52	0.52	SA
4	Gender diversity efforts are not effective in administrative positions.	3.49	3.75	3.75	3.66	0.70	SA

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5	Men do not face barriers to career advancement in academia.	3.41	3.39	3.50	3.45	0.51	A
6	Gender-related biases and stereotypes impact decision-making processes within our university.	3.68	3.69	3.70	3.69	0.40	SA
7	Lack of awareness about gender diversity issues contributes to the persistence of challenges related to inclusivity.	3.56	3.58	3.55	3.56	0.52	SA
8	There is no equal opportunity for individuals of all genders to advance into administrative positions within our university.	3.70	3.63	3.67	3.67	0.47	SA
9	The current representation of women and marginalized genders among faculty members do not accurately reflects the diversity of our society.	3.51	3.56	3.52	3.53	0.64	SA
	Cluster Summary	3.52	3.52	3.53	3.52	0.64	SA

**Note**. $X_F$  = Mean of Fac. members;  $X_P$  = Mean of Per. staff;  $X_A$  = Mean of Admin,  $X_G$  = Grand Mean, **SD** = Standard Deviation; **SA** = Strongly Agreed, **A**= Agreed, n= Faculty members = 228; Personnel Staff = 36; Administrators = 180.

Table 2 showed that the grand mean values of six out of nine items in the table were between 3.52 and 3.69, indicating strong agreement among respondents that the items reflect the current state of gender diversity and inclusivity in Nigerian universities. The remaining three items had grand mean values within the same range. The standard deviation values ranged from 0.40 to 0.70, indicating close responses.

*Research Question 3:* What are the ways inclusive policies, training and cultural norms promote gender diversity and inclusivity in Nigerian universities?

Table 3: Mean scores and standard deviation of the ways inclusive policies, training and	l							
cultural norms promote gender diversity and inclusivity in Nigerian universities.								

S/N	Ways inclusive policies, training and cultural norms promote gender diversity and inclusivity	$\overline{X_{F}}$	$\overline{X_P}$	$\overline{X_A}$	$\overline{X_G}$	SD	Remarks
1	Allocate adequate funds and equal opportunity for all cadres of staff for training.	3.62	3.56	3.59	3.59	0.59	SA
2	Inclusive recruitment and promotion guidelines are effectively communicated and implemented within our university.	3.69	3.57	3.66	3.64	0.47	SA
3	Conduct training need assessment regularly.	3.41	3.42	3.53	3.47	0.65	А
4	Inclusive training has helped reduce gender- based discrimination and bias in the university community.	3.71	3.63	3.68	3.67	0.46	SA
5	Leadership development programs have equipped me with skills to create a more inclusive environment within our university.	3.41	3.34	3.34	3.36	0.52	A
6	Ensure that employees are involved in making decisions regarding training	3.62	3.54	3.50	3.54	0.63	SA

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	Cluster Summary	3.56	3.48	3.48	3.51	0.65	SA
	initiatives.						
13	Cultural sensitivity is important when designing and implementing inclusive policies and training	3.59	3.33	3.30	3.41	0.49	А
	the effectiveness of gender sensitization training programs.						
12	our university. Encourage traditional gender roles that impact	3.58	3.46	3.48	3.51	0.50	SA
11	diversity and inclusivity. Dissuade cultural norms that often conflict with the implementation of inclusive policies within	3.57	3.37	3.24	3.39	0.51	А
10	In Nigerian universities, to discourage traditional cultural norms that hinder gender	3.68	3.69	3.70	3.69	0.46	SA
9	Adopt clearly defined training and development policy and strategy as the framework for training activities.	3.16	3.20	3.30	3.24	0.71	А
8	Cultural sensitivity is important when designing and implementing inclusive policies and training initiatives.	3.62	3.39	3.27	3.42	0.72	A
7	Ensure that selection for staff development and training must be based on appraisal results.	3.53	3.50	3.49	3.51	0.52	SA

**Note**. $X_F$  = Mean of Fac. members;  $X_P$  = Mean of Per. staff;  $X_A$  = Mean of Admin,  $X_G$  = Grand Mean, **SD** = Standard Deviation; **SA** = Strongly Agreed, **A**= Agreed, n= Faculty members = 228; Personnel Staff = 36; Administrators = 180.

Table 3 showed that 7 out of 13 items have a grand mean value of 3.51 to 3.69, indicating a strong agreement among respondents that inclusive policies, training, and cultural norms positively impact gender diversity and inclusivity. The remaining 6 items have grand mean values within the 2.50 - 3.49 range. The cluster summary has a grand mean of 3.51, indicating strong agreement among respondents that these items influence gender diversity and inclusivity in Nigerian Universities. The standard deviation values of the 13 items in the Table as well as that of the cluster ranged between 0.46 to 0.72 which indicated that the responses of the respondents were close to one another and to the mean.

#### Discussion

The study investigates gender diversity and inclusion in Nigerian universities, revealing challenges in creating productive learning environments. The findings on how the current state of gender diversity and inclusivity in Nigerian universities manifest across faculty, administrative positions, and academic disciplines, highlights under representation of marginalized genders. The findings of the study are similar with previous studies by (Ekpe, et al., 2014). The studies of Sibani (2017) revealed how cultural norms, particularly in Nigerian society, significantly impact educational institutions, potentially stifling minority gender growth and reinforcing biases. The findings also highlighting the need for advancing gender diversity and addressing implicit biases, highlighting the need for a comprehensive approach to address structural imbalances. The findings of the study revealed that the adoption of policies supporting gender diversity, equal pay, and family-friendly practices by institutions as occurred globally (Bolivar, Bryant, Bui, King-Mils,

Knapp & Tyner, 2019; Őnday, 2016) will have great impact in addressing gender disparity in universities.

The widespread agreement that laws that were consistent with cultural norms were more likely to be embraced and implemented into daily life is in line with research conducted by (Worlu&Nwachukwu, 2015). Conflicts arose, nevertheless, as social mores clashed with the ideas of inclusivity. These disagreements highlight the importance of striking a delicate balance between the need for change and customary respect (Don-Solomon &Fakidouma, 2021). The findings emphasized that gender sensitization training is effective in changing attitudes and behaviours but requires a culture shift within institutions to fully benefit. These findings agree with Alonso (2017), which state that keeping a diverse workforce that reflects the society we serve, job training, staff development, and promotion is necessary.

Policy changes are necessary to strengthen training results. The study highlights the importance of mentorship, professional development, performance reviews, and equitable compensation in reducing gender discrepancies in career paths. These were supported by Alonso (2017), who averred that training initiatives can improve attitudes, lessen stereotypes, and foster empathy. The findings of the study emphasize the need for strategic alignment between inclusive policies, training initiatives, and cultural norms, and suggests a comprehensive approach for a more open and egalitarian academic ecosystem in Nigerian universities.

## Conclusions

This study the roles of transformative human resources management practices in promoting gender diversity and inclusivity in Nigerian Universities. The authors concluded that HRM practices can be transformed to promote gender diversity and inclusivity in Nigerian universities. The authors also concluded that inclusive policies, training, and cultural norms positively can impact gender diversity and inclusivity in Nigerian Universities.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- 1. Academic institutions in Nigeria should endeavour to guarantee effective communication, accessibility, and cultural alignment, universities should review and update their inclusive policies.
- 2. Cultural differences and contextual issues should be considered when designing gender sensitization training.
- 3. The initiative that entails the collaboration with outside non-profits, trade groups, and organizations that are committed to advancing gender equality should be encouraged in all institutions in Nigeria.
- 4. Institutions in Nigeria should endeavour to implement a strategy plan for initiatives in training and inclusive policies.
- 5. Academic institutions in Nigeria should endeavour toestablish mentoring programs for junior academics and staff, focusing on women and underrepresented genders.
- 6. Academic institutions in Nigeria should promote a friendly learning atmosphere that promotes gender diversity, challenges biases, and provides equal access to resources for success for both sexes.

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