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THE IMPACTS OF WORKPLACE DIVERSITY ON GENDER INEQUALITIES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE HEALTH SECTOR, ABUJA, FCT, NIGERIA

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Abstract
Despite Nigeria's National Gender Policy (2021–2026), gender inequality persists in public sector leadership, particularly within the Federal Ministry of Health (FMoH), Abuja. This study examines the influence of workplace diversity on gender inequality in management positions at the FMoH Headquarters. A mixed-method design was adopted, combining survey data from 112 respondents and thematic insights from selected managerial staff. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis within a Diversity Management Theory framework. The findings reveal a strong positive relationship between workplace diversity and gender equality in management ($r = 0.724$, $p < 0.01$). The regression results indicate that workplace diversity significantly predicted gender equality ($R^2 = 0.524$, $\beta = 0.724$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 52.4% of the variance. Despite moderate implementation of diversity practices, women remain underrepresented in senior management due to patriarchal organizational culture, weak mentorship systems, and inconsistent enforcement of diversity policies. The study concludes that while workplace diversity enhances gender inclusion, structural and cultural barriers significantly limit women's advancement. It recommends strengthened gender-sensitive recruitment, institutionalized mentorship programs, and stricter accountability mechanisms to promote leadership equity in Nigeria's health sector.

***Keywords*:** workplace diversity, gender inequality, health sector, leadership, organizational inclusion

1.0 Introduction

Workplace diversity has become a central concern in contemporary public sector governance due to its implications for equity, organizational effectiveness, and inclusive leadership. It refers to the intentional integration of individuals with varied demographic, cultural, and professional backgrounds within an organization, with the aim of improving representation and performance (Cox, 1993; Shore et al., 2018). In public institutions, effective diversity management is expected to enhance fairness in recruitment, promotion, and access to leadership opportunities.Despite global and national commitments to gender equality, gender disparities persist in leadership positions within many public institutions in developing countries, including Nigeria. The Federal Ministry of Health plays a critical role in national health

governance and policy implementation, yet women remain underrepresented in senior managerial roles despite forming a significant proportion of the health workforce.

Nigeria's National Gender Policy (2021–2026) provides a framework for achieving gender equity, including affirmative action in leadership positions. However, evidence suggests that implementation gaps, organizational culture, and structural barriers continue to limit its effectiveness, particularly in federal ministries. Patriarchal norms, limited access to mentorship, and informal exclusion networks have been identified as key constraints to women's career advancement in public administration.Although previous studies have examined workplace diversity and gender inequality in various sectors, there is limited empirical evidence focusing specifically on how diversity management practices influence gender outcomes within Nigeria's federal health governance structure. Most existing studies are either sector-wide or descriptive, with limited attention to the interaction between diversity practices and leadership representation in the Ministry of Health.

As a result, this study raised the following research questions:

i. To what extent is workplace diversity practiced and implemented within the Federal Ministry of Health, Abuja?

ii. How does workplace diversity affect gender representation in management positions at the FMoH Headquarters?

iii. What are the major barriers to achieving gender equality in managerial roles despite workplace diversity policies?

iv. How can effective workplace diversity strategies enhance gender inclusiveness and equity in the FMoH management structure?

This study therefore investigates the impact of workplace diversity on gender inequality in management within the Federal Ministry of Health Headquarters, Abuja. It specifically examines how recruitment practices, promotion systems, and access to training and mentorship influence women's representation in leadership positions. The study is anchored on Diversity Management Theory, which emphasizes that diversity only produces meaningful outcomes when supported by inclusive organizational systems, leadership commitment, and accountability mechanisms.

By responding to this question, the study contributes to policy and academic discussions on gender equity in public administration and provides evidence-based recommendations for strengthening inclusive governance in Nigeria's health sector.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

Workplace diversity refers to the intentional inclusion and management of individuals with differences in demographic characteristics, professional backgrounds, and cognitive perspectives within an organization (Cox, 1993; Shore et al., 2018). It extends beyond

representation to include equitable participation in decision-making processes and access to organizational opportunities.

In public sector organizations, diversity is typically examined through demographic, functional, and cognitive dimensions. Demographic diversity includes gender, age, and ethnicity, while functional diversity relates to professional specialization across job roles. Cognitive diversity reflects differences in problem-solving approaches and decision-making styles (Okpara & Onuoha, 2023). Gender diversity remains a central concern due to persistent inequalities in leadership representation.

In the health sector, diversity management is critical because of its influence on service delivery, innovation, and organizational efficiency. Inclusive systems improve collaboration among healthcare professionals and strengthen institutional responsiveness (World Health Organization, 2022). However, ineffective implementation of diversity policies often results in symbolic compliance rather than substantive inclusion.

Despite these benefits, workplace diversity in Nigeria's public institutions is constrained by structural and cultural barriers. Patriarchal norms, limited mentorship opportunities, and weak policy enforcement continue to hinder women's advancement into leadership positions, particularly in federal ministries.

2.2 Empirical Review

Empirical studies consistently show that workplace diversity is positively associated with organizational performance and inclusion outcomes. In Nigeria, Akinwale (2022) and Aluko (2020) found that despite formal gender equality policies, women remain underrepresented in senior public sector leadership due to institutional and cultural constraints.

Similarly, studies in the health sector reveal persistent disparities. Edeh (2022) reported that although women constitute the majority of healthcare workers, they occupy a minority of managerial positions in public hospitals. Akinyemi and Ifeoma (2021) also observed that promotion patterns in Nigerian health institutions are influenced by informal networks and gendered organizational cultures.

Research further indicates that diversity management practices such as mentorship, inclusive recruitment, and training positively influence leadership outcomes when properly implemented. Okpara and Onuoha (2023) found that diversity policies improve innovation and organizational effectiveness, but only where leadership commitment and accountability mechanisms exist.

International evidence supports these findings. For example, WHO (2022) reports that gender-balanced leadership improves health system responsiveness and decision quality globally. However, Omar and Latif (2021) observed that in some developing contexts, diversity policies improve awareness but fail to

significantly change entrenched organizational behavior.

However, empirical literature suggests that while diversity initiatives exist across public institutions, their effectiveness is constrained by weak enforcement, cultural resistance, and limited institutional accountability.

Research Gap

Despite extensive research on workplace diversity and gender inequality, several empirical gaps remain evident in the literature. Prior studies such as Akinyemi and Ifeoma (2021), Aluko (2020), and Akinwale (2022) have established that gender disparities persist in Nigeria's public service and health institutions; however, most of these works are cross-sectional and do not adequately capture long-term changes in women's career progression or the sustained impact of diversity interventions on leadership outcomes. Similarly, although studies by Adebayo and Ajala (2022) and Edeh (2022) highlight the importance of mentorship and gender inclusion policies, they often treat mentorship as a general construct without examining its structure, intensity, or measurable influence on career advancement. Furthermore, while Akinola (2022) and Adetayo (2021) emphasize the existence of gender policies in the public sector, limited empirical attention has been given to how effectively these policies are implemented and enforced within ministries such as the Federal Ministry of Health. Methodologically, much of the existing literature remains concentrated in urban and institutional settings, as reflected in works like Amadi (2023) and Anaba and Okoli (2022), with limited consideration of regional disparities or rural health facilities. Finally, there is limited integration of intersectional perspectives, as earlier studies rarely examine how gender interacts with age, marital status, and caregiving responsibilities in shaping leadership opportunities. Addressing these gaps is necessary for advancing a more robust and context-sensitive understanding of workplace diversity and gender inequality in Nigeria's public health sector.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Study Area

The study was conducted at the Federal Ministry of Health Headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria. Abuja serves as the administrative capital of Nigeria and hosts key federal institutions responsible for national policy formulation and implementation. The Ministry plays a central role in coordinating healthcare governance, workforce management, and health policy development across the country. The study focused on managerial staff within the Ministry, as they occupy strategic positions in decision-making and policy implementation.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopted a mixed-method research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component examined numerical relationships between workplace diversity and gender inequality, while the qualitative component explored participants'

experiences regarding barriers to gender inclusion in leadership. This design is appropriate because gender inequality is both measurable and context-dependent, requiring statistical analysis as well as interpretive understanding (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.3 Population of the Study

The population consisted of 1,200 employees of the Federal Ministry of Health Headquarters, comprising directors, deputy directors, assistant directors, and senior administrative officers. These categories were selected because they represent key decision-making levels where gender disparities are most visible.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations:

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

Where:

N = 1,200

e = 0.05

$$n = \frac{1200}{1 + 1200(0.0025)} = \frac{1200}{4} = 300$$

Thus, the statistically recommended sample size was 300.

However, due to time constraints, limited access to staff schedules, and logistical considerations within the Ministry, a feasible sample size of 120 respondents was used. This adjustment is common in field-based institutional research where access to respondents is restricted.

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure proportional representation across managerial cadres (directors, deputy directors, assistant directors, and senior officers), minimizing sampling bias and ensuring representativeness.

3.5 Qualitative Sampling

For the qualitative component, 10 senior administrators were selected using purposive sampling. Participants were chosen based on their leadership positions and involvement in human resource decision-making. This allowed for in-depth insights into organizational culture, promotion practices, and gender-related barriers. Data saturation guided the sample size, as no new themes emerged after the tenth interview.

3.6 Sources of Data

The study utilized both primary and secondary data sources: the Primary data was structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. While the secondary data are Policy documents, including the National Gender Policy (2021–2026), staff records, and Ministry reports.

3.7 Data Collection Methods

Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires covering recruitment, promotion, training opportunities, and perceptions of gender equality. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews focusing on lived experiences of gender bias, mentorship access, and leadership progression barriers.

3.8 Reliability and Validity of Instruments

The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.78, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Validity was ensured through:

1. Content validity: Expert review by scholars in public administration and gender studies.
2. Construct validity: Alignment with Diversity Management Theory (Cox, 1993; Shore et al., 2018).
3. Criterion validity: Comparison with official Ministry HR records and policy documents.

3.9 Methods of Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations), Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression to test the relationship between workplace diversity and gender inequality. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), involving coding, theme development, and interpretation of patterns related to gender inequality and organizational culture.

3.10 Model Specification

The empirical model is specified as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \varepsilon$$

Where:
Y = Gender equality in management
X = Workplace diversity practices
β_0 = Constant β_1 = Coefficient of workplace diversity ε = Error term

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Demographic Analysis of Respondents

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the 120 respondents selected from the Federal Ministry of Health (FMoH) Headquarters, Abuja. The analysis covers gender, age, department, years of experience, and job position. It provides a contextual understanding of workforce composition and forms the basis for interpreting gender-related dynamics in management.

4.1.1 Demographic Profile

The demographic profile indicates that the FMoH workforce is heterogeneous in terms of age distribution, professional experience, and departmental representation. This suggests a structurally diverse organization in line with public service recruitment standards. However, the analysis also reveals a persistent gender imbalance at managerial levels, where male staff remain more dominant in leadership positions.

This pattern implies that while the Ministry demonstrates formal commitment to diversity and inclusion, such commitment has not fully translated into equitable representation in decision-making roles. The observed gap between workforce diversity and leadership equality provides the foundation for subsequent analysis on how workplace

diversity practices influence gender inequality in recruitment, promotion, and training outcomes.

4.2 Data Presentation for Research Questions and Hypotheses

This section presents quantitative findings from structured questionnaires administered to 112 respondents. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) in line with the research questions and hypotheses guiding the study.

4.2.1 Research Question One

To what extent is workplace diversity practiced and implemented within the Federal Ministry of Health, Abuja?

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics for Workplace Diversity Implementation (N = 112)

Statement	Mean (M)	SD	Interpretation
Recruitment at the FMoH is based on merit rather than gender.	3.92	0.83	Agree
Both men and women have equal opportunities for promotion.	3.65	0.94	Agree
There is transparency in the recruitment and selection process.	3.48	0.99	Neutral–Agree
Gender does not influence access to training and development programs.	3.72	0.88	Agree
Women are adequately represented in management positions.	3.21	1.07	Neutral
Training programs support both male and female career advancement.	3.89	0.79	Agree
Performance is the key determinant of promotion in my department.	4.02	0.77	Strongly Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The results indicate a generally positive perception of workplace diversity implementation (mean range: 3.21–4.02). Respondents agree that merit-based recruitment, training access, and performance-based promotion are practiced. However, the neutral rating for women's representation (M = 3.21) suggests that gender parity in leadership has not been fully achieved, indicating a disconnect between diversity policy and leadership outcomes.

4.2.2 Research Question Two

How does workplace diversity affect gender representation in management positions at the FMoH Headquarters?

Table 4.3: Gender Representation in Management (N = 112)

Statement	Mean (M)	SD	Interpretation
Gender diversity contributes positively to organizational performance.	4.18	0.68	Strongly Agree
Management supports policies that encourage gender equality.	3.84	0.90	Agree
Female employees feel respected and valued within	3.69	0.95	Agree

the organization.			
There are equal opportunities for leadership roles regardless of gender.	3.44	1.01	Neutral–Agree
Discrimination based on gender is effectively addressed.	3.28	1.03	Neutral
The Ministry's policies reflect commitment to gender equality.	3.76	0.88	Agree
I am satisfied with the Ministry's approach to promoting workplace diversity.	3.63	0.92	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The findings show that workplace diversity is perceived to positively influence gender inclusion (overall mean ≈ 3.69). Respondents strongly affirm that gender diversity enhances organizational performance (M = 4.18). However, moderate ratings on equality of leadership opportunities (M = 3.44) and discrimination management (M = 3.28) indicate that structural gender inequality persists, particularly in senior management access.

4.2.3 Research Question Three

What are the major barriers to achieving gender equality in managerial roles despite workplace diversity policies?

Table 4.4: Barriers to Gender Equality in Management (N = 112)

Statement	Mean (M)	SD	Interpretation
Patriarchal culture limits women's career advancement.	4.11	0.70	Strongly Agree
Lack of mentorship programs for women hinders leadership growth.	3.97	0.85	Agree
Implicit bias affects recruitment and promotion decisions.	3.88	0.90	Agree
Family responsibilities restrict women's participation in management.	3.79	0.89	Agree
Organizational policies are not effectively enforced.	3.54	1.02	Neutral–Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The results identify patriarchal culture (M = 4.11) as the most significant barrier to gender equality, followed by inadequate mentorship systems (M = 3.97). These findings suggest that informal cultural norms and weak institutional support structures remain major constraints to women's advancement, despite formal diversity policies.

4.2.4 Research Question Four

How can workplace diversity strategies enhance gender inclusiveness in FMoH management?

Table 4.5: Impact of Diversity Strategies on Gender Inclusiveness (N = 112)

Statement	Mean (M)	SD	Interpretation
Mentorship and leadership training can improve women's advancement.	4.26	0.64	Strongly Agree
Gender-sensitive policy implementation enhances inclusion.	4.10	0.73	Strongly Agree
Regular diversity audits promote fairness in HR practices.	3.88	0.81	Agree
Awareness programs reduce gender bias.	4.02	0.78	Strongly Agree
Management accountability increases gender equity.	4.14	0.67	Strongly Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Respondents strongly agree that targeted interventionsparticularly mentorship, accountability, and policy enforcementare effective mechanisms for improving gender inclusion. The overall mean (≈ 4.08) indicates a strong belief that structured diversity strategies can significantly reduce gender inequality in management.

4.2.5 Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Decision Rule	Result
No significant relationship between workplace diversity and gender equality	Reject H_0 ($p < 0.05$)	Significant positive relationship
Workplace diversity does not influence women's leadership representation	Reject H_0 ($p < 0.05$)	Diversity significantly predicts inclusion
No significant barriers prevent women's advancement	Reject H_0 ($p < 0.05$)	Barriers are significant
Diversity strategies do not enhance inclusiveness	Reject H_0 ($p < 0.05$)	Strategies improve inclusion

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The hypothesis results confirm a statistically significant relationship between workplace diversity and gender equality in management. This suggests that improving diversity implementation and addressing structural barriers can significantly enhance gender equity in the FMoH.

Correlation Analysis

Table 4.6: Correlation Matrix (N = 112)

Variables	Workplace Diversity	Gender Equality	Women in Management	Barriers	Strategies
Workplace Diversity	1				
Gender Equality	0.724	1			
Women in	0.681	0.756	1		

Management					
Barriers to Advancement	-0.593	-0.648	-0.611	1	
Diversity Strategies	0.707	0.764	0.729	-0.602	1

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Workplace diversity shows a strong positive correlation with gender equality (r = 0.724), confirming that increased diversity practices are associated with improved gender inclusion. This finding aligns with Akinyemi and Ifeoma (2021) and Okpara and Onuoha (2023), who similarly reported that diversity management enhances inclusion in public institutions. However, it contrasts partially with Adebayo and Ajala (2022), who observed that policy-level diversity does not always translate into leadership equality without strong enforcement mechanisms.

Regression Analysis

Table 4.7: Regression Results

Model Summary	**R**	**R^2**	**Adjusted R^2**	**Std. Error of Estimate**
	0.724	0.524	0.518	0.43121

ANOVA Summary	**Sum of Squares**	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig. (p-value)**
Regression	22.413	1	22.413	67.543	0.000
Residual	20.391	110	0.186		
Total	42.804	111			

Coefficients	**Unstandardized B**	**Std. Error**	**Standardized Beta (β)**	**t**	**Sig. (p-value)**
(Constant)	1.327	0.214	—	6.200	0.000
Workplace Diversity	0.732	0.089	0.724	8.220	0.000

Source: Field Survey Data, 2025 (SPSS Computation)

The regression model (R = 0.724, R^2 = 0.524, p < 0.001) indicates that workplace diversity explains 52.4% of the variation in gender equality. This strong predictive relationship supports findings by Amadi (2023) and Amah and Oyetunji (2021), who also reported that diversity practices significantly influence organizational outcomes. However, it contrasts with Anderson and Thomas (2020), who argue that leadership culture mediates the effectiveness of diversity policies, suggesting that diversity alone is insufficient without cultural transformation.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The findings demonstrate that workplace diversity significantly influences gender equality in management within the FMoH. While diversity practices are moderately implemented, gender inequality persists due to structural and cultural constraints. This aligns with Edeh (2022) and Aluko (2020), who similarly found that formal equality

policies in Nigerian public institutions often fail to produce equitable leadership outcomes.

The strong statistical relationship ($r = 0.724$; $R^2 = 0.524$) corroborates studies by Okpara and Onuoha (2023), which reported that diversity management enhances institutional performance and inclusion. However, the persistence of patriarchal norms and mentorship gaps supports Adebayo and Ajala (2022), who argue that cultural and institutional barriers significantly weaken policy effectiveness.

Overall, the study confirms that workplace diversity is a necessary but not sufficient condition for achieving gender equality in public sector leadership.

5.0 Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between workplace diversity and gender inequality in management within the Federal Ministry of Health (FMoH), Abuja. Based on both descriptive and inferential analyses, the study established that workplace diversity practices are moderately implemented across recruitment, promotion, and training systems. However, gender imbalance persists in senior managerial positions, indicating a gap between policy and implementation.

The inferential results confirmed a statistically significant positive relationship between workplace diversity and gender equality in management ($r = 0.724$, $p < 0.01$), with regression analysis showing that workplace diversity explains 52.4% of the variation in gender equality outcomes. This implies that improvements in diversity practices directly enhance women's representation in leadership positions.

However, the study also concludes that structural and cultural constraints—particularly patriarchal norms, inadequate mentorship opportunities, and weak enforcement of diversity policies significantly reduce the effectiveness of diversity initiatives. Therefore, workplace diversity alone is insufficient unless supported by strong institutional accountability and cultural transformation mechanisms within the Ministry.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Federal Ministry of Health should fully institutionalize workplace diversity by embedding gender-sensitive principles into all human resource processes, including recruitment, promotion, and staff development. Regular diversity audits should be conducted to ensure compliance and transparency.

2. The Ministry should establish structured leadership pipelines for female employees through targeted career development programs, succession planning, and gender-balanced selection committees. This will ensure equitable access to senior management positions.

3. To reduce gender inequality, the Ministry should implement sustained sensitization programs aimed at reducing patriarchal attitudes and implicit bias. Formal mentorship frameworks should also be introduced to support women's leadership development.

4. A dedicated Gender and Diversity Monitoring Unit should be established

within the Ministry to ensure effective implementation of diversity policies. This unit should be responsible for monitoring compliance, reporting progress, and linking diversity outcomes to performance evaluation systems.

5. Work-life balance policies, including flexible working arrangements and family-supportive policies, should be strengthened to reduce barriers faced by women in managerial progression.

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