

Inclusive Leadership and Age Diversity: Implications for Performance in Nigeria's Industrial Workplaces

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of age diversity on employee performance within Nigeria's manufacturing sector. In today's multigenerational workplace, organizations comprise employees from Baby Boomers to Generation Z, each contributing distinct experiences, skills, and work ethics. While age diversity can enhance creativity, decision-making, and innovation, its benefits are not automatic and depend on effective management practices. Poorly managed age-related differences may lead to conflict, communication breakdowns, and reduced cohesion. The study is anchored on the Similarity-Attraction Theory, which explains how demographic similarities influence group formation and cooperation in the workplace. A quantitative research design was employed, utilizing a cross-sectional survey method. Data was collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire distributed to 210 employees selected through a combination of cluster, proportional, and convenience sampling techniques across five departments of the company. The respondents, aged between 18 and 65, represented various managerial levels. Statistical analysis, including correlation, was conducted to examine the relationship between age diversity and organizational performance. The findings revealed a weak positive correlation ($r = 0.041$, $p < .05$), suggesting that age diversity contributes marginally to improved performance, potentially limited by unresolved generational tensions and inconsistent inclusion practices. The study concludes that while age diversity holds promise for enhancing performance, this potential remains underutilized in the absence of strategic diversity management. Recommendations include implementing inclusive leadership training, mentorship programs, and intergenerational team-building initiatives to bridge generational gaps and harness age diversity as a strategic organizational asset.

Keywords: Age Diversity, Employee Performance, Generational Workforce, Manufacturing Sector, Workplace Inclusion

INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly evolving global economy, workforce diversity has emerged as a critical factor shaping organizational performance. Among the various dimensions of diversity, age diversity the coexistence of employees from multiple generational cohorts within a single workplace has garnered increasing attention. As organizations in both the public and private sectors strive to remain competitive and innovative, they are recognizing the importance of managing demographic shifts, especially those related to age, in order to harness the full potential of their human capital (Patel, 2016).

The modern workplace now comprises employees ranging from Baby Boomers and Generation X to Millennials and Generation Z, each bringing distinct experiences, expectations, and work ethics. This generational mix, while enriching the organizational environment with diverse perspectives, also presents unique challenges in team dynamics, communication, leadership, and performance management (Griffin & Moorhead, 2014). As such, age diversity is no longer a passive demographic characteristic but a dynamic organizational variable that directly influences employee behavior, engagement, and output.

In Nigeria, where socio-economic pressures and an evolving labour market are prompting older employees to remain active in the workforce alongside younger generations, age diversity is increasingly visible across industries. Companies are encountering the need to balance the wisdom and institutional knowledge of older

employees with the technological fluency and innovation of younger staff (George et al., 2024; Huang et al., 2022). This intersection of experience and modern skillsets can be a strategic advantage; if managed effectively. Leroy et al. (2022) posits that diversity, including age, fosters creativity and improves organizational outcomes when inclusion is intentional and systematic.

However, the benefits of age diversity are not automatic. Poorly managed age-related differences may lead to workplace tension, generational misunderstandings, and inequities in career development and performance evaluation (Deshpande & Kulshreshtha, 2024). In the Nigerian context, the situation is further complicated by ingrained cultural attitudes toward age, authority, and seniority, which can either foster respect and mentorship or breed conflict and resentment. Without deliberate efforts to integrate diverse age groups into cohesive teams, organizations risk reduced morale, inefficient collaboration, and ultimately, lower performance.

Human resource management practices must therefore evolve to accommodate generational diversity by promoting inclusive training, fair performance appraisal systems, and leadership models that value contributions across age groups (Ezeafulukew et al., 2024). Yet, many Nigerian organizations still lack comprehensive age diversity policies, and those that exist are often superficial or misaligned with internal realities (Nwakanma, 2024). Consequently, the potential of age-diverse teams remains underutilized, and its impact on employee performance underexplored.

Despite growing interest in workplace diversity, there remains a notable gap in empirical research specifically addressing age diversity and its influence on employee performance within Nigerian organizations. Existing studies tend to focus broadly on diversity's relationship with organizational productivity rather than zooming in on employee-level outcomes. Furthermore, the nuanced ways in which age diversity affects individual motivation, teamwork, adaptability, and productivity remain largely understudied.

This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by examining the relationship between age diversity and employee performance in selected organizations in Nigeria. By doing so, it aims to offer evidence-based insights into how organizations can transform generational diversity into a strategic tool for enhancing employee effectiveness, fostering innovation, and improving overall performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Age diversity in the workplace refers to the inclusion of employees from different generational cohorts, ranging from younger, early-career individuals to older, more experienced personnel. The concept has gained increased attention in contemporary organizational research due to demographic shifts, global aging populations, and extended working lives.

Age Diversity, Creativity, and Innovation

Creativity and innovation are core competencies in modern firms, especially in competitive and fast-paced markets. Creativity involves generating novel and useful ideas, while innovation entails the implementation of these ideas into practical processes, products, or services. Several scholars have investigated how age diversity influences these capabilities. Darwin (2014) argues that age diversity is a strategic asset that enhances firm performance by fostering creativity. According to Gerhardt et al. (2021), organizations benefit from the combination of novel perspectives brought by younger employees and the experiential wisdom of older workers. Similarly, Amadi (2025) found that age-diverse teams introduce a broader range of ideas and less conformity to traditional norms, enhancing the organization's innovative potential. Trompenaars and Woolliams (2025) supports this position, stating that the complementary values held by individuals of different age groups encourage greater creativity and inventiveness in heterogeneous teams compared to more homogeneous groups.

However, the relationship between age diversity and creativity is not universally positive. Rudolph & Zacher (2024) caution that empirical studies on age and workplace innovation are still limited and often produce mixed results. Pletzer (2021) conducted a bivariate analysis on age diversity and its relationship to idea generation, dissemination, and implementation, concluding that there was neither a linear nor non-linear association. This

finding suggests that creativity outcomes may depend on other intervening variables such as organizational culture, managerial practices, or task complexity.

Stereotypes surrounding age also affect the potential for creative synergy. Arkorful et al. (2025) identifies common misconceptions such as the belief that older employees are resistant to change, less adaptable to technology, or prone to health-related absenteeism. These stereotypes, if internalized by organizations, may lead to underutilization of older employees and hinder the full realization of age diversity's potential. Darwin (2014) contends that such stereotypes discourage firms from leveraging the capabilities of both younger and older workers, thereby negating potential performance gains. Emmanuel & Dze (2021) further observed that some studies found no significant link between age diversity and firm performance, while others reported negative associations.

These inconsistencies in findings highlight the complexity of the relationship between age diversity and organizational creativity. They also suggest the need for context-specific research that considers organizational size, industry type, leadership style, and the nature of work tasks.

Age Diversity in Decision-Making and Problem Solving

Decision-making and problem-solving are essential functions within organizations that require the integration of diverse knowledge bases, cognitive styles, and experiences. Bayat et al. (2022) define decision-making as a series of conscious cognitive functions influenced by contextual factors. From this perspective, age-diverse teams are posited to offer a richer repertoire of decision-making tools and approaches.

Zaidi et al. (2010) highlight that older employees contribute intuition and experiential knowledge that can enhance decision-making quality. These attributes become especially valuable in situations that require long-term strategic thinking or deep understanding of market history and dynamics. Conversely, Darwin (2014) emphasizes the importance of younger employees in modern decision-making processes, particularly because they possess current technological skills and familiarity with contemporary business environments. Glass (2017) supports this dualistic approach, noting that effective managers tap into the potential of generationally diverse workforces to produce nuanced, forward-thinking decisions.

Furthermore, age diversity may facilitate cross-generational learning and idea exchange, contributing to more innovative problem-solving. Zaidi et al. (2010) argue that heterogeneous workforces encourage novel perspectives, thus enhancing management's ability to design creative solutions. Collaborative decision-making in age-diverse teams also promotes consensus building and mitigates the risks associated with groupthink.

Nevertheless, challenges persist. Dezo and Ross (2013) argue that age diversity may also generate communication difficulties, conflicting values, and interpersonal tensions. These challenges can impede the decision-making process if not effectively managed. The "social attraction paradigm" proposed by Simons and Rowland (2011) suggests that homogeneous teams may experience smoother communication and faster decision-making due to shared norms and expectations. Darwin (2014) and Tolbize (2008) concur, stating that age-based differences in communication styles, work ethics, and expectations can result in misunderstandings and internal conflict.

While acknowledging these challenges, Zaidi et al. (2010) insist that quality problem-solving is more likely in heterogeneous environments where different viewpoints are represented. However, this potential can only be realized through intentional leadership strategies that promote inclusivity, mutual respect, and structured collaboration.

Age Diversity and Quality of Services and Products

A growing body of research also links age diversity to the quality of services and products offered by firms. This relationship is primarily mediated by knowledge-sharing dynamics and mentoring practices that leverage the unique strengths of different age cohorts. Mutunga and Gachunga (2013) underscore the role of succession planning in promoting intergenerational knowledge transfer. They highlight the dual mechanisms of upward



(reverse mentoring) and downward (traditional mentoring) information exchange that foster continuous learning and innovation. These intergenerational exchanges ensure that service and product quality are either maintained or improved.

Darwin and Palanisamy (2015) further observe that diverse perspectives stemming from generational differences enrich product development processes. Younger employees typically contribute current market trends, technological fluency, and innovation, while older employees offer market insight, stability, and customer relationship knowledge. This blend leads to the creation of products and services that are not only technically sound but also aligned with customer needs and preferences. Parrotta, Pozzoli, and Pytlikova (2011) found empirical support for this proposition. Their study concluded that age-diverse workforces positively impact the quality of output by integrating diverse skills, perspectives, and experiences. Alesina and La Ferrara (2005) also argue that age heterogeneity enhances organizational creativity and productivity, ultimately leading to superior goods and services.

However, the successful integration of diverse age cohorts in product and service development requires deliberate human resource strategies. Without appropriate management, age-related differences can lead to knowledge silos, reduced collaboration, and inefficiencies. Organizations must therefore invest in training programs, team-building initiatives, and inclusive policies that bridge generational divides and foster collaborative innovation.

Synthesis and Emerging Insights

The literature reveals both the opportunities and challenges associated with age diversity in organizational contexts. On the one hand, empirical studies suggest that age-diverse teams can enhance creativity, decision-making, and product quality by leveraging the complementary strengths of different generational groups. On the other hand, these benefits are not guaranteed; they depend significantly on the organizational climate, leadership practices, and the management of interpersonal dynamics. Notably, the literature emphasizes the importance of inclusive organizational cultures that mitigate age-related stereotypes and promote intergenerational learning. While some studies report no clear or even negative associations between age diversity and performance metrics, these inconsistencies often reflect deeper structural or contextual issues rather than the inherent limitations of age diversity itself.

A key takeaway is that age diversity should be strategically managed. Organizations that recognize the potential of generational differences, and develop inclusive practices to bridge those differences—are more likely to harness the full benefits of age diversity in performance-related outcomes. Conversely, firms that ignore the challenges associated with age heterogeneity risk internal conflict, reduced collaboration, and underperformance.

In essence, age diversity represents both a challenge and an opportunity for organizations seeking to enhance performance through innovation, effective decision-making, and high-quality output. While the literature presents mixed findings, the general consensus is that age diversity, when properly managed, can serve as a valuable asset. Future research should explore the moderating effects of organizational culture, leadership styles, and sector-specific factors on the relationship between age diversity and firm performance. Empirical studies employing longitudinal data and diverse organizational settings will provide a more nuanced understanding of how age diversity functions as a strategic human resource variable.

This study is built on Similarity-Attraction Theory, as put forward by Byrne et al. (1971); and it is used to explain group formation. This theory focuses on people's preference to interact with other individuals who share common life values, beliefs and experiences with them. One reason for this preference is that having knowledge of this shared attitude could help them to predict the future behaviour of the other person or people. Similarity attraction theory assumes that people like to associate themselves with those whom they perceive to be like them based on demographic characteristics such as age, ethnicity, etc. It is believed that this attraction helps to promote cohesion, communication and cooperation among team members (Kunze, Boehm, & Bruch, 2011).

For instance it is possible to find younger employees in an organization pursuing common social activities with fellow colleagues within their age group and even going for lunch breaks with their colleagues who are of the same age group. This kind of attraction and personal ties tends to promote communication and cooperation among them because they are able to share similar life and work experiences with one another and as such develop their similar life attitudes and beliefs. However, employees who are either older, middle aged or younger than such unified group, may conclude that the reason why they are not invited or accepted in such group is due to their age and as a result may start generating and exhibiting age prejudiced attitudes in the organization (Kunze, Boehm, & Bruch, 2011). This paradigm also assumes that people tend to apply negative assumptions and attitude to their colleagues who are different from them.

Thus, the theory helps to explain how age can be a motivation which a set of needs hold for a particular employee. Such needs could be satisfied by meaningful social and interpersonal relationships with other employees (Nwachukwu & Chladkova, 2017). Employees may be motivated to work by the good relations he/ she has with co-workers. Relatedness needs are those needs that draw people into interpersonal contact for social- emotional acceptance, caring and status. Belonging to such category may make them feel accepted and thus increase their job motivation (Haslam et al. 2000). This theory deals with employees' need to be accepted by others, achieve mutual understanding on matters that are important to them and exercise some influence over those with whom they interact with on daily basis in the organization (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2017).

The similarity attraction paradigm is said to result in improved communication among employees, increase their social integrations and also increase their longing to maintain group relationship (Abbasi et al. 2024). Most studies have found the similarity attraction theory to be the reason for the negative effect of workforce diversity; seeing that it can result in members liking, cooperating and favoring each other against the out-group, and these behaviors can bring some negative outcomes like; low communication, cooperation, cohesion and increased conflict. For instance if an employee is from a different age group as compared to the rest of his/her colleague, it is assumed that such employee may have less job satisfaction and may showcase less organizational commitment, and have turnover intent as oppose to workforce of the same ethnic background working in a group.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative research design to examine workforce diversity and organizational. A cross-sectional survey method was employed to collect data from a representative sample at a single point in time. This approach was appropriate for capturing the current state of diversity-related practices and perceptions within the organization. Quantitative data was gathered using a structured, self-administered questionnaire comprising both open- and close-ended questions. The study area was a manufacturing company in Lagos which houses 550 employees across 10 departments. The study population included employees across low, middle, and top management levels that had joined the organization within the past 12 months and were between the ages of 18 and 65. This inclusion criterion ensured that the data reflected recent and relevant experiences regarding workplace diversity.

A sample size of 210 respondents was determined using Yamane's (1973) formula at a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error. A combination of cluster, proportional, and convenience sampling techniques was employed. First, departments were clustered; five departments were randomly selected, and respondents within each were selected proportionally and conveniently. The use of cluster and proportional sampling ensured representation across departments, while convenience sampling facilitated practical administration of the instruments within the available time and resources. The research instrument consisted of a validated questionnaire. Content validity was ensured through expert review, and reliability was confirmed via a pilot test that yielded a Cronbach's alpha value exceeding 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency. Primary data collection involved hand-distribution of the questionnaires using the drop-and-pick method. Ethical considerations including informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality were strictly observed to maintain research integrity and build participant trust.



RESULTS

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	109	51.9
Female	101	48.1
Total	210	100.0

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Below 25 Years	16	7.6
26-35 years	101	48.1
36-45 years	68	32.4
46 years above	25	11.9
Total	210	100.0

Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Christianity	139	66.2
Islam	71	33.8
Total	210	100.0

Ethnic Group	Frequency	Percentage
Yoruba	99	47.1
Igbo	71	33.8
Hausa	7	3.3
Others	33	15.7
Total	210	100.0

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	31	14.8
Married	162	77.1
Divorced/Separated	15	7.1
Widowed	2	0.9

Total	210	100.0
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Level of Monthly Income	Frequency	Percentage
Less than N99,000	31	14.8
N100,000-N149,000	78	37.1
N150,000-N199,000	96	45.7
N250,000 above	5	2.4
Total	210	100.0

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

The table above presents the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents in Unilever Nigeria plc. More males participated in the study, as represented by a little bit above half of the population, that is, 51.9%, compared to their female counterpart, represented by 48.1%. With regards to age, respondents below 25 years were represented with 7.6%, 26-35 years were represented with 48.1%, and 36-45 years were represented with 32.4% while respondents who are 46 years above were represented with 11.9%.

With specific reference to religion, more Christian were represented with 66.2% compared to their counterparts who practice Islam, being represented by 33.8%. Apart from this, the table further shows the ethnic affiliation of respondents. Yorubas were represented with 47.1%, Igbos with 33.8%, Hausa with 3.3% while respondents from other ethnic groups like Ijaw, Urobo and Edo among others were represented with 15.7%.

The marital status of respondents show that more married respondents participated in the study; this was represented by 77.1%. This was followed by those who are single that formed 14.8%. The Divorced/Separated were represented with 7.1% while the widowed were represented with 0.9%. Lastly, this section also captured the monthly income of respondents. Respondents with less than N99,000 were represented with 14.8%, between N100,000 and N149,000 were represented with 37.1%, followed by N150,000 to N199,000 which was represented by 45.7% while those on a salary range above N250,000 were represented with 2.4%.

Age and diversity

This section examines the univariate data from respondents regarding their level of agreement to age and diversity in the work place. The analysis is presented in the table below.

Questions	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
This organization provides me with equal opportunities for training and career development	41(19.5%)	67(31.9%)	12(5.7%)	59(28.1%)	31(14.7%)	210 (100.0)
My team leaders include all members at different ages in problem solving and decision making.	61(29.0%)	78(37.1%)	6(2.8%)	45(21.4%)	20(9.5%)	210(100.0)
The age differences in work group might cause conflict.	98(46.7%)	16(7.6%)	11(5.2%)	36(17.1%)	49(23.3%)`	210(100.0)

At work, I experience lack of bonding with people of different age group.	45(21.4%)	87(41.4)	37(17.6%)	29(13.8%)	12(5.7%)	210(100.0)
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Table 2. Age and Diversity

From the above, the univariate analysis shows that 19.5% strongly agreed that the organization provides them with equal opportunities for training and career development, 31.9% agreed, 28.1% disagreed while 14.7% strongly disagreed. From the findings, 5.7% were undecided. With respect to their team leaders, including all members at different ages in problem solving and decision making. 29.0% strongly agreed, 37.1% agreed, 2.8% were undecided, 21.4% disagreed while 9.5% strongly disagreed. The table also shows if the age differences in work group might cause conflict, 46.7% strongly agreed that it causes conflict, 7.6% agreed, 5.2% were undecided, 17.1% disagreed while 23.3% strongly disagreed. In addition, 21.4% strongly agreed that at work, they experience lack of bonding with people of different age group; 41.4% agreed, 17.6% were undecided, 13.8% disagreed while 5.7% strongly disagreed.

Age Diversity Correlation with Organization’s Performance

The researcher conducted a correlation analysis between Age diversity and firm’s performance. As shown in Table 4.41. below, the Pearson co-efficient correlation value obtained was a weak positive value, $r = .041$, $p < .05$. This weak value indicates that the relationship between age diversity and performance is only slightly positive meaning that an increase in age diversity will result in a very small positive change in organizational performance. The weak nature of the correlation could be accounted for by other contravening variables such as conflicts within the firms and ease or difficulty in decision-making.

Age Diversity	Pearson Correlation	1	-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.05	-
Organisational Performance	Pearson Correlation	0.41	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.763	-
	N	210	210
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

Table 3. Age Diversity Correlation with Organization’s Performance

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings from this study reveal the perceptions of employees on age diversity and its implications in the workplace. From the univariate data presented in Table 1, it is evident that attitudes toward age-related inclusivity and its management vary considerably among the respondents, highlighting both strengths and challenges within the organization’s diversity framework.

To begin with, when asked whether the organization provides equal opportunities for training and career development regardless of age, 51.4% of respondents (19.5% strongly agreed and 31.9% agreed) gave positive responses. However, 42.8% (28.1% disagreed and 14.7% strongly disagreed) indicated otherwise, while 5.7% remained undecided. This result indicates a divided perception among employees, suggesting that while some experience equitable access to development opportunities, others may perceive or encounter subtle age-related biases. This finding is supported by the study of Kunze, Boehm, and Bruch (2021), which emphasized that perceived age discrimination can undermine employee engagement and satisfaction, even when formal policies promote equality.

Further, the data shows that a majority (66.1%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that team leaders include individuals from all age groups in decision-making processes. This reflects a level of inclusive leadership and participatory management. According to Hellerstedt et al. (2024), when leadership actively involves members of different age groups, it fosters trust and cooperation, reduces generational conflict, and enhances team effectiveness. Nevertheless, 30.9% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, suggesting that inclusivity in decision-making is not yet uniformly practiced across the organization.

Interestingly, a significant proportion of the respondents (54.3%) strongly agreed or agreed that age differences can lead to workplace conflict, while 40.4% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. This indicates that age diversity, while beneficial in promoting knowledge transfer and innovation, can also be a source of interpersonal tension. North (2022) note that generational stereotypes and differing work values often contribute to misunderstandings and conflict among diverse age groups. Such conflicts, if not properly managed, can reduce group cohesion and productivity.

Furthermore, the data reveals that 62.8% of respondents experience difficulty bonding with colleagues from different age groups. This is a critical concern, as workplace cohesion is essential for collaboration, morale, and overall organizational performance. Urick (2022) argue that while age diversity brings varying experiences and perspectives, it may hinder social integration when generational gaps are not bridged through inclusive culture and practices.

The correlation analysis between age diversity and organizational performance revealed a weak positive relationship ($r = 0.041$, $p < .05$), suggesting that while age diversity has a slight influence on enhancing performance; the impact is not statistically strong. This minimal effect may be attributed to underlying organizational issues such as unresolved intergenerational conflicts, inadequate team cohesion, and inconsistent implementation of inclusive policies. In workplaces where generational differences are not effectively managed, age diversity can lead to misunderstandings, communication breakdowns, and resistance to collaborative efforts. Such challenges hinder the capacity of diverse age groups to work synergistically toward common organizational goals.

Shore and Chung. (2022) emphasize that the positive outcomes of diversity are not automatic; rather, they require strategic management practices that promote inclusion, mutual respect, and active participation across all age groups. Organizations that invest in fostering intergenerational dialogue, mentorship programs, and inclusive leadership tend to experience better utilization of age-diverse talent. Moreover, training on unconscious bias and age-related stereotypes is essential to creating a psychologically safe workplace where every age group feels valued. Without such interventions, the potential of age diversity remains underutilized, leading to the kind of weak correlation observed in this study. Thus, comprehensive diversity management is vital for transforming demographic variety into tangible organizational performance gains.

In essence, while the organization demonstrates efforts toward age diversity and inclusion, the findings suggest gaps in practice. Employees' mixed perceptions regarding equity in development opportunities, intergenerational inclusion, and team cohesion point to the need for structured policies and training that promote inclusivity, reduce generational bias, and enhance age-related diversity outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The findings from this study underscore the nuanced realities of age diversity within the workplace. While the manufacturing sector in Nigeria demonstrates some commitment to inclusive practices; evident in the participation of various age groups in decision-making and leadership processes, the data reveal significant disparities in perception and experience among employees. Just over half of the respondents believe that equal training and development opportunities are available regardless of age, while a notable proportion feels otherwise, indicating lingering concerns of age-based bias.

The study further highlights that although inclusive leadership exists to an extent, it is not consistently applied across the organization. This inconsistency affects team cohesion, as evidenced by the substantial number of respondents reporting conflict and difficulty bonding across generational lines. These interpersonal tensions

suggest that age diversity, while potentially beneficial, can also serve as a source of division if not effectively managed.

The weak positive correlation between age diversity and organizational performance suggests that the benefits of a multigenerational workforce are not being fully realized. Contributing factors may include unresolved intergenerational conflicts, absence of structured inclusion programs, and lack of targeted interventions such as unconscious bias training and mentoring initiatives.

Therefore, to harness the full potential of age diversity, organizations must go beyond token inclusion. There is a pressing need for strategic diversity management that includes inclusive policies, intergenerational collaboration, and continuous leadership engagement. By addressing the challenges identified, the manufacturing sector can convert demographic diversity into a strategic advantage that drives innovation, cohesion, and performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to help the manufacturing sector effectively manage age diversity and enhance employee performance.

Firstly, develop and implement comprehensive age diversity policies that go beyond compliance. These policies should promote equal opportunities in training, career advancement, and participation in decision-making for all age groups. Transparent communication about these policies is essential to ensure that employees are aware of the organization's commitment to inclusion.

Secondly, strengthen leadership training programs with a focus on inclusive management practices. Team leaders and managers should be equipped with skills to manage generational differences, mitigate age-related biases, and foster participation across all age groups. This includes training on unconscious bias and conflict resolution to address intergenerational misunderstandings and improve team dynamics.

Thirdly, establish structured mentorship and reverse mentoring programs to bridge generational gaps. Senior employees can pass on institutional knowledge while younger staff contribute fresh perspectives and technological skills. Such programs enhance mutual respect, learning, and collaboration, ultimately boosting morale and productivity.

Fourth, promote intergenerational team-building initiatives to enhance bonding and social cohesion among diverse age groups. Informal platforms such as retreats, cross-generational task forces, and collaborative projects can encourage meaningful interactions and reduce generational divides.

Fifth, periodically assess employee perceptions of diversity and inclusion through surveys and feedback mechanisms. This will help monitor the effectiveness of implemented strategies and identify areas for improvement.

Lastly, create a culture of psychological safety, where employees across age groups feel valued, respected, and empowered to express themselves. This involves recognizing the contributions of all employees and fostering an environment that supports inclusive innovation.

Suggestions for future studies

Future studies should examine multiple sectors and firms, comparing age diversity practices, inclusion strategies, and performance outcomes across varied organizational contexts. Future research should adopt mixed-method approaches, integrating quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews or focus groups to gain deeper insights into generational dynamics and explain observed weak correlations. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to assess how interventions, such as mentorship programs and inclusive leadership training, impact organizational performance over time. Scholars should further explore the role of mediating variables, including employee engagement, team cohesion, and organizational culture, in shaping the relationship between age

diversity and performance. Additionally, future studies may evaluate the effectiveness of structured inclusion initiatives and intergenerational collaboration strategies across different organizational and industry contexts.

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