



## **Gender Diversity and Employee Performance of Hotels in Port Harcourt, Nigeria**

**Obinna Nweke**

Department of Management, Faculty of Management Sciences, Rivers, State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, PMB 5080, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

### **ABSTRACT**

This study examined the relationship between relationship between gender diversity and employee performance of hotels in Port Harcourt. The study adopted the cross-sectional survey in its investigation of the variables. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. The population for the study was 565 employees of ten (10) selected hotels in Port Harcourt. A sample size of 234 was determined using Taro Yamen's formula. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Statistics. The result showed that there is a significant relationship between gender diversity and employee performance of hotels in Port Harcourt. The study therefore recommends that it is important for hotels that effective workplace strategies and policies be designed, implemented and monitored, in order not only to eliminate racial discrimination but also to support a more diverse workforce.

**Keywords: Gender Diversity, Employee Performance, Innovativeness, Product Quality**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In a rapidly dynamic global marketplace, marked by the avalanche of technological advancement, organizations demand a more flexible and competent workforce in order to be adaptive and to remain competitive (Sing, 2004). Therefore, the need for well qualified employees becomes a strategic pursuit. Consequently, an organization's workforce diversity strategy is a key mechanism in ensuring the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to achieve organizational goals and create competitive advantage (Peteraf, 1993). The escalation of global competition and the relative success of economies that give an emphasis to investing in training have resulted in the recognition of the importance of training in recent years (Holden, 1997).

Indeed, at the turn of the twenty-first century HR managers reported that one of the main challenges they faced involved issues of training and development (Stavrou, Brewster & Charalambous, 2004).

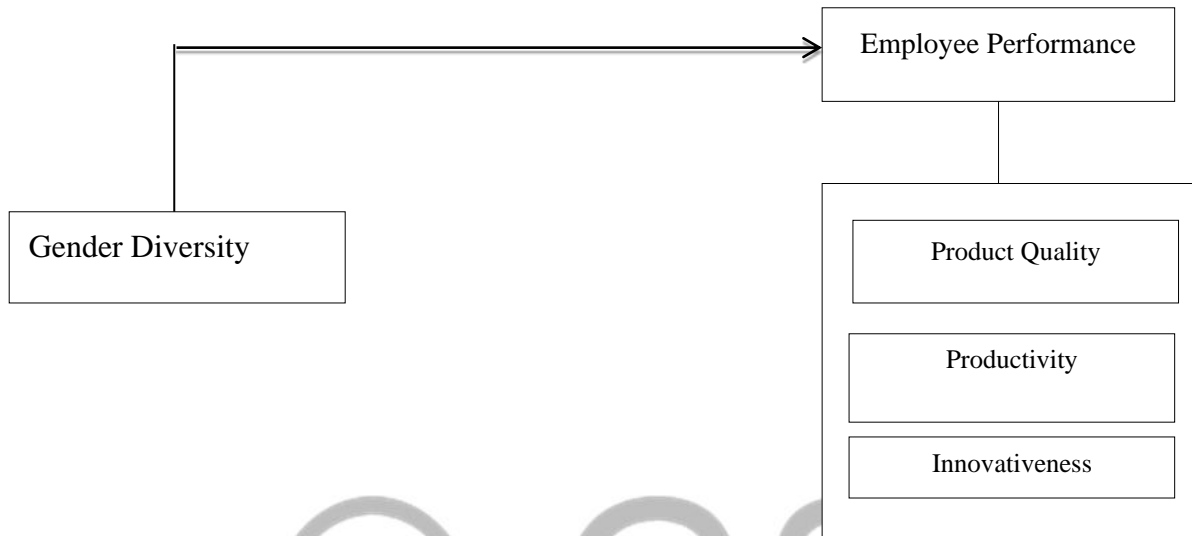
Theoretically, the workplace diversity literature espouses three different theoretical frameworks for the examination of the possible effects of workplace diversity (O'Reilly, Williams & Barsade, 1998). The first is social categorization, which, according to Turner (1987) describes the categorization of people based on salient attributes like gender, ethnicity or age, resulting in stereotyping on the basis of these differences. The attraction theory, which asserts that similarity on salient and non-salient attributes like race or values increases interpersonal attraction and attachment (Berscheid & Walster, 2008). The third is information and decision making theory, which examines the impact of distribution of information and expertise on work-teams. The Social attraction theory predicts that firms with greater employee diversity will be better able to penetrate increasingly diverse product markets and have more complex inimitable social resources (Richard & Johnson, 2000).

Contemporary trends in the legal framework have also necessitated the putting in place specific statutes making it unlawful to discriminate on grounds such as age, sex, marital status, race, national origin, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, union membership or non-membership, part-time or full time workers, or ex-offenders whose convictions are spent (Torrington, Hall & Taylor, 2005). Cox (2001) agrees with this but argues that workforce diversity is not the sole domain of the human resource function in the organization primarily aimed at compliance with legal requirements; but it is a systematic organization-wide effort based on the premise that for organizations to survive and thrive there must be an inherent value

in diversity. Cox notes that, the challenge of diversity is not simply to have it but to create conditions in which its potential to be a performance barrier is minimized and its potential to enhance performance is maximized (Cox, 2001). Diversity management therefore refers not only to those groups that have been discriminated against or that are different from the dominant or privileged groups, but to the mixture of differences, similarities and tensions that can exist among the elements of a pluralistic mixture (Thomas, 2005). Workforce diversity is a subjective phenomenon, created by group members themselves who on the basis of their different social identities categorize others as similar or dissimilar (O'Reilly, Williams, & Barsade, 1998). Loden & Rosener (1991) define diversity as that which differentiates one group of people from another along primary and secondary dimensions. Primary dimensions of diversity, those exerting primary influences on our identities, are gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, age and mental or physical abilities and characteristics. They claim that primary dimensions shape our basic self-image as well as our fundamental world views and have the most impact on groups in the workplace and society. Secondary dimensions of diversity on the other hand are less visible, exert a more variable influence on personal identity and add a more subtle richness to the primary dimensions of diversity. They include: educational background, geographic location, religion, first language, family status, work style, work experience, military experience, organizational role and level, income and communication style. The secondary dimensions impact our self-esteem and self-definition (Loden & Rosener, 1991). This study therefore examines the relationship between gender diversity and employee performance of hotels in Port Harcourt. Furthermore, this study will also be guided by the following research questions:

- i. What is the relationship between gender diversity product quality of hotels in Port-Harcourt?

- ii. What is the relationship between gender and improved productivity of hotels in Port-Harcourt?
- iii. What is the relationship between gender and innovativeness of hotels in Port-Harcourt?



*Fig.1 Conceptual Framework for the relationship between gender diversity and employee performance*

*Source: Author's Desk Research, 2019*

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Foundation

#### Social Identity Theory

This theory proposes that individuals have a tendency of categorizing themselves into social groups that have importance for them, consequently, profiling the manner in which they relate with others from their own self-groups and from diverse groups (Tajfel, 2000). Social identity stems from classification of people, their uniqueness and prestige associated with the group, the uniqueness of the group and the elements that are originally linked to its formation. The theory is based on the idea of social differentiation and categorization. In regard to social categorization,

the main idea is on how the group is used to divide, classify and order the social environment in order to make individuals undertake various forms of social actions (Tajfel, 2000). This also occurs when employees stereotype themselves by accrediting themselves with attitudes, behaviors and other features they relate with affiliation in that group (Kulik & Bainbridge, 2006). Assumption of this theory to this study is that employees are likely to be committed if working environment provides opportunity for employee to perceive themselves as being equitable employees and if workforce diversity practices offer avenues for employee categorization.

### **Gender Diversity**

As significantly established in this study, gender in Nigeria, as in other countries, focuses on empowering women (World Bank, 2012). In addition, as a key factor in the millennium development goals, it is an essential component in achieving other goals (World Bank, 2012). There is a consistent drive towards educating women and empowering them socially, economically and politically, especially given that the Nigerian society is patriarchal in nature (Asiyanbola, 2005). Likewise constitutionally, women are encouraged to hold political positions (Vanguard, 2013). The national constitution reflects this drive towards women's political involvement, which states that there is a 5 percent allocation of legislative seats at the federal, state and local levels to women. However, arguably, women's empowerment or equality cannot be achieved with such a low percentage. Furthermore, women do not fully utilise this allocation (Millennium Development Report, 2010), leading to a further question of why this is so? Taking into consideration the dynamics of the Nigerian society, women's lack of involvement in governance can be because of several factors, which again hinges strongly on male dominance and the need to further empower women (Duke, 2010). Aside the need to empower women politically in Nigeria, gender disparity spans education, health and economic issues. Concerning

education, reports (National Planning Commission, 2007) show that gender imbalance occurs at all educational levels. Hence, the level of support for girls is lower than for their male counterparts due to issues like cultural values and beliefs, which intersect ethnicity and gender (National Planning Commission, 2007) shows that gender imbalance occurs at all educational levels. Hence, the level of support for girls is lower than for their male counterparts due to issues like cultural values and beliefs, which intersect ethnicity and gender (National Planning Commission, 2007). This gender imbalance affects national and organizational levels of diversity dialogue as the lack of educated and skilled women automatically create a gap in talent pool. Consequently, from empirical study, at an organizational level, gender issues target ensuring equality between the men and women in the workplace. This includes promoting and supporting agencies that encourage the education of the girl child at the national level, empowering women in the organisation and beyond, as well as encouraging them to take leadership positions at all levels. These processes include mandatory diversity and inclusion training for all leaders, targeted monitoring of women with high potential, special career training courses for women, provision of crèches at all office locations, paid maternity leave, inclusion of diversity activities in tasks and targets, promotion of a women's network, and corporate sponsorship of women's organisations.

The outcomes received from narratives reveal that these gender related interventions led to the establishment of a strong diversity consciousness in the offices, an increase in female employees, and women staying longer in the job. Concerning women's empowerment at the national level, narratives indicated that the existing gender balance sensitization and merit-based culture in the organization results in women who leave the organizations for public sector roles achieving top management positions. In addition, due to the MNCs' support for agencies that promote girls'

education, there has been a rise in the number of female staff in male dominated professions. This, then, is an indication that more women are entering male dominated fields in the education system, though this is still limited. Consequently, the challenges with these interventions link to national concerns on the need for strong support and promotion of gender balance, especially in the education sector. Drawing from debates on the focus for post- 2015 (AWID, 2014), which focuses on the proposed sustainable development goals to be met by 2030 (UN-DESA, 2013; IIED, 2013), there is a call to strengthen partnerships between the public and private sectors to drive policies on gender balance and women empowerment initiatives. This is to ensure accountability of both parties. These discussions also call for international policies such as fiscal policies to include economic, cultural and women's rights in their processes.

### **Employee Performance**

Employee performance is the measure of how well an individual converts input resources (labor, materials, machines etc.) into goods and services. It is the increase in functional performance, including quality (Dorgan, 1994). An employee's performance depends on his/ her understanding of how different combinations or resources affect the final outcome. In the context of the hotel the, combination of the given routines or resources is meant to ensure that the customer is satisfied with the service offering. Service delivery involves people and the key question for management is how to develop a performance management approach which balances quality with efficiency and reduces misunderstandings between the employees, performance refers to the act of performing; the carrying into execution or recognizable action, achievement or accomplishment, in the undertaking of a duty, employee performance refers to the effective discharge of one's duty for good results. It is how well an employee is fulfilling the requirements of the job (Rue & Byars, 1993). Cascio (2006) defines performance as working effectiveness,

that is, the way in which somebody does a job, judged by its effectiveness, it is important for the company to make every effort to help low performers. Performance is classified into four elements: Planning, monitoring, developing, rating and rewarding. In the planning stage, Planning means setting goals, and developing strategies and schedules to accomplish the goals. Monitoring is the phase in which the goals are looked at to see how well one is doing to meet them. Monitoring means continuously measuring performance and providing ongoing feedback to employees and work groups on their progress toward reaching their goals. Ongoing monitoring provides the opportunity to check how well employees are meeting predetermined standards and to make changes to unrealistic or problematic standards. During the developing stage an employee is supposed to improve any poor performance that has been seen during the time frame one has been working at the company. During planning and monitoring of work, deficiencies in performance become evident and can be addressed.

Ingram and McDonnell (1996) reckon that for example, the ongoing rivalry between kitchen and restaurant can often cause arguments, and adversely affect the quality of the guests meal experience. This may be partially explained by the differences in the skills and personalities of cooks and waiters, and by the pressure (and heat) of a busy meal service. It is an ongoing management challenge to try to help both factions to see themselves as part of the greater whole or as a team. Employee attitude ranks as the most important critical success factor to hotel companies, but is difficult to measure accurately. This makes it even harder to control especially in instances where negative attitude prevails over positive work attitude. Customers judge quality on a range of objective and subjective issues which are often difficult to pin down. Understanding the requirements of the service, how it interacts with the other activities and the uncertainties involved are important in determining what the outcome of the service will be.



Employee performance in an organization can be influenced by a wide range of factors including labor management relations social and psychological conditions of work, wage incentives physical fatigue and trade union practices (Taiwo, 2010). These will always determine the actions the employee will take and the outcomes to be expected from such actions. The outcomes of the actions taken depend on how well the employees understand what is required of them.

### **Product Quality**

This refers to the standard of the sum total of output resulting the combination of inputs and goes through technical process (Oeily, 2010). All economic or organizational activities result in the production a definite output of goods and services. Allwell (2012).

**Productivity:** As measured by the amount of output per employee, continuous improvement of productivity has become even more important as global competition has increased. The productivity of the human resources in an organization is affected significantly by management efforts, programs, and systems.

**Quality:** The quality of products and services delivered significantly affects organizational success over the long term. If an organization gains a reputation for providing poor-quality products and services, it reduces its organizational growth and performance. An emphasis on quality requires continuous changes aimed at improving work processes. That need opens the door for reengineering the organizational work done by people. Customer value received and satisfaction become the bases for judging success, along with more traditional HR measures of performance and efficiency

### **Improved Productivity**

The importance of training on the employee performance, through accelerating the learning process, is mentioned in many researches (e.g. Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Employee

performance(improved productivity), achieved through training, refers to immediate improvements in the knowledge, skills and abilities to carry out job related work, and hence achieve more employee behaviour towards the organizational goals (Ichniowski, Kathryn & Giovanna, 2007). Kamoche and Mueller (2008) mentioned that training should leads to the culture of enhancing learning, to raise employee performance and ultimately higher efficiency for the firm.

### **Innovativeness**

Innovation refers to the process of translating an idea or invention into a good or service that creates value or for which customers will pay; it is finding a better way of doing something (Frame & White, 2004). Innovation can be viewed as the application of better solutions that meet new requirements, in-articulated needs, or existing market needs. Innovation is accomplished through having effective products, processes, services, technologies, or ideas that are readily available to markets, governments and society. The term innovation can be defined as something original and, as a consequence, new, that breaks into the market or society (Frankelius, 2009). The measures of innovation at the organizational level include financial efficiency, process efficiency, employees' contribution and motivation, as well benefits for customers. Measured values will vary widely between businesses, covering for example new product revenue, spending in research and development, time to market, customer and employee perception & satisfaction, number of patents, additional sales resulting from past innovations (Frankelius, 2009).

## **Gender Diversity and Employee Performance**

Debates are rife on the impact of gender diversity in the top-level management and organizational leadership on the general performance of the organization. Chin (2013) reports that a study found that firms that had high gender diversity in their top-leadership reported significant abnormal returns. Van Knippenberg, De Dreu and Homan (2014) found that while most top leadership and management in most firms are dominated by men, an inclusion of women in such teams make them not only become diverse but also improves the quality of the leadership and top-level management.

Gender diversity in senior management teams has increased, probably due to three important reasons. According to the Research Institute (2012) these are; the changing proportion of women board-level positions, increase in government intervention and change in debates on the issue of gender as an issue of equality and fairness to one of superior performance. Van Knippenberg, *et al.* (2014) are in consensus contending that gender diversity improves the quality of organizational leadership and management by stating that gender diversity enhances managerial information processing and decision making of the managerial team resulting in effective strategy formulation and decision making key processes. Nakagwa (2015) found that gender diversity in addition to other kinds of diversities in the workforce provided more innovative and higher-quality solutions, due to a combination of gender-based perspective presented by both males and females in the managerial teams.

In other words, gender diversity accrues a spectrum of insights into the vital strategic leadership and managerial decision enhancing the quality and potential effectiveness of such decisions for the firm. Dezo and Ross (2012) contend that heterogeneous groups (in terms of gender) provide

different perspectives and bring different views and experiences that inform leadership and managerial roles and lead to high quality decisions at this level. The authors go further to postulate that a mere presence of a woman, having congruent information on the issue at hand may stimulate a broader and a deeper deliberation of alternative in the top management team (TMT).

Organizational leadership may also benefit in terms of leadership styles. Research has determined that women and men exhibit disparities in their managerial behavioral propensities (Van Knippenberg, *et al.*, 2014). Dezo and Ross (2012) posits that women lean towards a more interactive leadership accentuating inclusion, participation and power sharing while men tend towards a less interactive leadership style, one focused on goal attainment with little participation. It follows then that moderate to high gender diversity may have a positive result in the leadership style that the organization adopts which can be a hybrid between the managerial behavioral and leadership propensities of males and the females.

According to Ali, Metz and Kulik (2007) the resource-based perspective holds that a firm can achieve sustained competitive advantage (C.A) by exploiting the valuable, rare, inimitable and non-sustainable (VRIN) resources. Gender diversity is associated with the VRIN resources that are capable of helping the firm to attain a competitive advantage. Ali, *et al.*, (2007) identify these resources including creativity and innovation, improved problem solving and market insight. It follows that a gender diverse workforce has the potential to enhance the team's general market insight as well as creativity and innovation. Darwin and Palanisamy (2015) make this point when they argue that a diverse workgroup brings different experiences, skills set and insights that enhance overall team performance which promote the performance of the organization.

Studies have found diversity to be a strategic source for the attainment of competitive advantage. For instance, Raza, Ishtiaqi, Kanwal, Butt & Nawaz (2013) found that gender, education, cultural and age diversities has a positive influence on the organizational competitive advantage. According to Darwin and Palanisamy (2015), some studies have found that mixed gender groups are perform more effectively than same gender groups. In this sense, it is arguable that gender diversity does accrue competitive advantages to firms that are more diverse in the gender composition of their workforce than firms that have a more homogeneous gender workforce. Ali, *et al.*, (2007) looks at gender diversity and decision-making and contends that gender diversity enhances organization's C.A by facilitating the making of quality decisions. A more gender diverse workforce brings to the firm a spectrum of perspectives, skills and knowledge that an organization can tap into and base its strategic goals up (Ali, *et al.*, 2013). Such a spectrum of perspectives is indispensable when it comes to decision making, and the resultant quality and informed decision accord the firm a competitive advantage when it comes to market analysis and determining a working business strategy.

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the cross-sectional survey in its investigation of the variables. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. The population for the study was 565 employees of ten (10) selected hotels in Port Harcourt. A sample size of 234 was determined using Taro Yamen's formula. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Statistics

From the foregoing point of view, the study thus hypothesized that:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no association between gender and product quality of Hotels in Port-Harcourt.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no association between gender and Improved Productivity of hotels in Port Harcourt.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no association between gender and innovativeness of hotels in Port Harcourt.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

### Bivariate Analysis

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between gender and product quality of Hotels in Port-Harcourt;

This hypothesis was tested by relating summarized data on gender with that of product quality using Spearman rank correlation statistical tool of analysis and the result from that analysis is shown in Table 4.14 below.

Table 1: Spearman rank correlation

		Gender	Product Quality
Gender	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.596**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	201	201
Spearman's rho Product Quality	Correlation Coefficient	.596**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	201	201

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Ver. 20 Output Window, 2018

A cursory glance at the table suggests that the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between gender and product quality should be rejected while the alternative is accepted. From the result, a sig value of = 0.000 was indicated. As such since this falls within the rejection region of our preferred 0.05 percent level of significant, we therefore reject the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between gender and product quality in the sample of hotels in Port Harcourt. As a consequence, it means that the level of gender diversity with respect to females handling issues of organizational image and workforce balancing, etc, will significantly increase

demand of hotel's products and job performance which are some of the indicators of product quality. Similarly, the correlation coefficient which measures the strength and nature of the relationship between gender and product quality is 0.596, which by implication indicates that the relationship was a strong and positive one.

**Hypothesis 2: Gender and Improved productivity**

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant relationship between gender and improved productivity of hotels in Port-Harcourt;

Table 2: Spearman rank correlation result for hypothesis 2

		Gender	Improved Productivity
Gender	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.444**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	201	201
Improved Productivity	Correlation Coefficient	.444**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	201	201

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Ver. 20 Output Window, 2018

A passing glance also of the above table suggests that the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between gender and improved productivity should be rejected while the alternative is accepted. This is because, from the result, a significance (Sig.) value of = 0.000 was indicated. As such since this falls within the rejection region of our preferred 0.05 percent level of significant, we therefore reject the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between gender and improved productivity in the sample of hotels in Port Harcourt. As a consequence, it means that the level of gender diversity will significantly lead to increment in higher rating of products and better perception of product packaging which are some of the indicators of improved productivity. However, the correlation coefficient which measures the strength and nature of the



relationship between gender and improved productivity is a low 0.444, indicating though a weak relationship but which was positive nevertheless.

**Hypothesis 3: Gender and Innovativeness**

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant relationship between gender and innovativeness of hotels in Port-Harcourt;

Table 3: Spearman rank correlation result for hypothesis 3

		Gender	Innovativeness
Gender	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.204**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.004
	N	201	201
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient	.204**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.
	N	201	201

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Ver. 20 Output Window, 2018

A quick glance at the above table hints that the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between gender and innovativeness should be rejected while the alternative accepted. From the result, a Significance (Sig.) value of = 0.004 was obtained. As such since this falls within the rejection region of our preferred 0.05 level of significant, we therefore reject the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between gender and innovativeness in the sample of hotels in Port Harcourt. As a consequence, it means that the level of gender diversity with respect to its indicators will significantly increase innovativeness by bringing about increment in training and development and introduction of new products and services annually. On the other hand, the correlation coefficient which measures the strength and nature of the relationship between gender and innovativeness is a low 0.204, which by implication indicates that the relationship was positive but weak, though it was significant.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study examined the relationship between gender diversity and employee performance of hotels in Port Harcourt. The study findings reveal that there is significant relationship between gender and employee performance of hotels in Port Harcourt. This finding agrees with Chin (2013) who reported that a study found that firms that had high gender diversity in their top-leadership reported significant abnormal returns. Van Knippenberg, De Dreu and Homan (2014) found that while most top leadership and management in most firms are dominated by men, an inclusion of women in such teams make them not only become diverse but also improves the quality of the leadership and top-level management.

Gender diversity in senior management teams has increased, probably due to three important reasons. According to the Research Institute (2012) these are; the changing proportion of women board-level positions, increase in government intervention and change in debates on the issue of gender as an issue of equality and fairness to one of superior performance. Van Knippenberg, *et al.* (2014) are in consensus contending that gender diversity improves the quality of organizational leadership and management by stating that gender diversity enhances managerial information processing and decision making of the managerial team resulting in effective strategy formulation and decision making key processes. Nakagwa (2015) found that gender diversity in addition to other kinds of diversities in the workforce provided more innovative and higher-quality solutions, due to a combination of gender-based perspective presented by both males and females in the managerial teams.

In other words, gender diversity accrues a spectrum of insights into the vital strategic leadership and managerial decision enhancing the quality and potential effectiveness of such decisions for

the firm. Dezo and Ross (2012) contend that heterogeneous groups (in terms of gender) provide different perspectives and bring different views and experiences that inform leadership and managerial roles and lead to high quality decisions at this level. The authors go further to postulate that a mere presence of a woman, having congruent information on the issue at hand may stimulate a broader and a deeper deliberation of alternative in the top management team (TMT).

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The present day working environment is turning out to be more diverse (Hodgetts & Hegar, 2008). Many organizations today endeavor to advance comprehensiveness of under-represented groups through proactive endeavors in order to create an environment where each employee is esteemed and their talents fully utilized to meet both individual and organizational goals. The capabilities of both genders and various diverse groups, offer a wider labour pool (Mazur, 2010). This study concludes that gender diversity significantly influences employee performance of hotels in Port Harcourt.

The study therefore recommends that it is important for hotels that effective workplace strategies and policies be designed, implemented and monitored, in order not only to eliminate racial discrimination but also to support a more diverse workforce.

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