An Assessment of the Effect of Workforce Diversity on Organizational Culture of Public Institutions in Zambia: A Case Study of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-Operation

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ABSTRACT: This study assessed workforce diversity and its effect on organizational culture at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation in Lusaka. The specific objectives were: to identify the existing workforce diversity traits at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation in Lusaka; to determine the relationship between workforce diversity and organizational culture practices in Lusaka, and to examine the effect of workforce diversity on organisational culture in public institutions through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation in Lusaka. Employing a mixed-method design, the research involved a sample of 50 respondents for a quantitative aspect while saturation method was for a qualitative design. Questionnaires were used for quantitative data while interviews were used for qualitative data. Purposive and random sampling techniques were used as sampling techniques. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and qualitative responses were thematically analyzed to capture comprehensive insights. The findings reveal that the ministry's workforce is diverse in terms of gender, age, educational qualifications, and management levels. Quantitative results indicate that 70% of respondents are male, with the predominant age group being 41-50- years (40%), and 44% of the staff holding a graduate degree. Qualitative feedback further indicates that this diversity contributes positively to creativity, innovation and problem-solving within the organization. However, some challenges were identified, including communication gaps and inconsistencies in managing diverse teams, which could hinder the full potential of a diverse workforce in terms of performance and productivity. The study concludes that (1) the ministry exhibits significant workforce diversity that requires systematic monitoring;(2) there is a positive relationship between workforce diversity and effective organizational culture practices; and (3) well-managed diversity enhances overall organizational performance. Based on these conclusions, it is recommended that the ministry establishes a centralized system for monitoring diversity metrics, implement regular diversity training and team-building initiatives to foster inclusivity, and develop robust diversity management policies to ensure equitable treatment and leverage diverse perspectives.

KEYWORDS: Workforce Diversity, Organizational Culture, Public Institutions, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lusaka, Zambia.

1.   INTRODUCTORY BACKGROUND

Workforce diversity is a typology of a variety of components among them: race, religion, sexual orientation, colour, education, geographical location, gender, language, ethnicity, professional qualification, occupation, different perceptions and attitudes. Diverse groups encourage innovation and decision-making, fostering a more inclusive organizational culture (Herring, 2020). Additionally, Nishii and Mayer (2021) stress that diverse workforce leads to enhanced employee engagement and a culture of collaboration, ultimately benefiting organizational performance (Shore et al. 2022). Ultimately, this diversity brings about the positive impact on organizational culture, including enhanced creativity and a greater sense of belonging among employees. A diverse workplace is an important asset, since it acknowledges the individual strengths of each employee and the potential they bring. According to Schein (2013), valuing the differences of others is what ultimately brings members of an organisation together and if utilised effectively can be the secret to a successful, thriving workplace and a fair work culture.

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On the other hand, organisational culture is the characteristic and the tangible personality originated inside every organization. According to Turner (2016), organizational culture differentiates the extraordinarily successful companies from all the rest and as such it can be a powerful, competitive advantage. The organizations' culture is always distinct, but the big winners, consistently, it is the organizations that make culture a priority.

Dwelling on the above, workplace diversity and organisational culture interact within the same organisation and for this reason, it is argued by scholars such as Gabriele and Caines (2014) that, it is important to recognise the types of diversity and to provide ways to ensure that a workplace, (employer, and employee) equally contribute toward a more diverse and inclusive workplace as per culture. In so doing, employing staff with barriers to employment and treating them fairly is one of the ways employers can attract a more diverse workplace and one that tis all-embracing of the different culture that exist among members.

Chanda and Zulu (2022) stress that a diverse workforce fosters a collaborative culture within organizations. It encourages inclusivity and mutual respect, thereby leading to enhanced employee engagement and morale, which ultimately enhances organizational productivity, performance and effectiveness.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation (MoFAIC) of Zambia is in charge of the country's international relations and diplomacy. Established shortly after Zambia's independence in October, 1964, it plays a critical role in shaping foreign policy, managing diplomatic missions, and fostering bilateral and multilateral relations for the nation's socio-economic development. The ministry focuses on promoting Zambia's international interests, engaging in regional cooperation, and addressing global issues such as trade, commerce, security, and development (Mwanza, 2023; Chanda & Zulu, 2022, & Kapoma, 2021).

To this end, workforce diversity within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation is increasingly recognized as crucial for enhancing diplomatic effectiveness and fostering a more inclusive workplace for enhanced production and productivity. Diverse teams are believed to bring varied perspectives, innovations, which can improve problem-solving and decision-making processes in international relations for the nation's development.

In the Zambian public service, workplace diversity has been widely attributed to the demographic composition of a workforce. According to Goyal (2009), the public sector in any society has diversity that is in mainly compositional in nature and herein heterogeneous on characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, religion, age, functional background, and organizational tenure. From a managerial perspective, the Zambian Public Service is a large and complex heterogeneous organization and to effectively accomplish its mission in today's turbulent environment, it must the public service engages in similar challenges as any other large corporation around the globe. In the same way, a professional civil service system is just one version of another contemporary personnel system based on the merit principle, (Ibid, 2009).

In addition to the foregoing legislations, the recruitment of civil servants is governed by the **Zambia Public Service Management Division (2023)**. "Public Service Recruitment Policy." This document provides the strategic approach to recruiting civil servants, emphasizing merit-based selection and diversity in hiring practices to ensure representativeness of the wider community. This is partly in view of the fact that Zambia has over 72 ethnic groupings and all of these without exception are entitled to participate in sharing the national cake through civil service employment which of course brings the diversities requiring adequate attention as this number of ethnic grouping entails diversities in culture, backgrounds etc. which has implications on work culture and job performance. The matter is further compounded by the fact that the age limit for civil service employment is 65 years and one is deemed an adult worth employing if qualified at the age of 20 years, implying another aspect of diversity in terms of age.

Some surveyed studies (Mwanza, 2023; Chanda & Zulu, 2022; Herring, 2020; Nishii & Mayer, 2021, & Kapoma, 2021, among others), have revealed that public organizations are increasingly embracing the use of workforce diversity as a strategy in the pursuit of organizational objectives. However, in Zambia, no such studies have been conducted to understand the impact of workforce diversity on the organizational culture of public institutions in Zambia, particularly focusing on the MoFAIC). A study by Hapompwe et al. (2020) focused on the impact of age and gender diversities on the performance of employees with a parastatal entity as a case study. This also differs with the current study as it focused on the employee out (performance) as a dependent variable while the current one has organizational culture as a dependent variable. These are among the profound gaps requiring bridging by the current study as it will focus on the broader scale and without pre-determined diversity variables.

1.1. Problem Statement

The current demographic trends indicate that the composition of the workforce is changing in Zambia with remarkable increases in youth participation, gender diversity, and attendant implications (Zambia National Statistical Agency, 2023; Chikonde, 2023, & Mumba, 2022). The need for better management and utilization of diversity in the workforce has been identified by academic scholars and advocates of government efficiency as one of the challenges facing public sector organisations and affecting their

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performance, development and effectiveness, (Mason & Sweeney, 2023; Barak, 2016). This issue compounded by organisational culture (public bureaucracy) has propelled workforce diversity by the presence of increased ethnic diversity in the Zambia civil service. This phenomenon if not well managed leads to inefficiency, ineffectiveness, and a general toxic work environment which ultimately impairs the prospects of the nation's meeting its socio-economic objectives in GDP growth, poverty and unemployment reductions. Research indicates that public institutions in Zambia exhibit similar organisational cultures and this leaves them to reap similar the benefits and / or challenges from the diversity of their workforce (Kambole and Phiri, 2023). There have been concerns of poor work culture in the Zambian public service as also expressed by the Public Service Commission (Lusaka Times, 2018). From the perspective of the Public Service Commission, it was not clear as to the cause of this poor workmanship in the public service. In an ideal situation, a diverse workforce fosters a collaborative culture within organizations …. It encourages inclusivity and mutual respect, thereby leading to enhanced employee engagement and morale, which ultimately enhances organizational productivity, performance and effectiveness (Chanda and Zulu, 2022).

In the present day, the civil service expands at a fast pace requiring it to recruit more civil servants, hence the need to have an understanding of people of different cultures who bring frameworks of knowledge, innovations and understanding to the work place thus leading to greater productivity and improved performance or otherwise, (Guillaume, 2017). However, in Zambia's public service, workplace diversity status has been inappropriate. Organizational culture has been on the forefront of the study of workplace diversity and various researchers have demonstrated that there is a link between organizational culture and a firm's productivity, which is very crucial for business performance (Mwanza, 2023; Chanda & Zulu, 2022; Herring, 2020; Nishii & Mayer, 2021, & Kapoma, 2021). The above studies did not particularly focus on the impact of workforce diversity on organizational culture in public institutions with special focus on the MoFAIC in Zambia thereby creating a literature and / or knowledge gap(s).

Going by the above analysis, very limited studies have been conducted to ascertain the impact of workforce diversity on the organizational culture of public institutions in Zambia and this has since created a knowledge gap. Hence, this study will look to assess the impact of workforce diversity on the organizational culture of public institutions in Zambia through a case study of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation (MOFAIC).

1.2. Study Objectives
- To identify the existing workforce diversity traits at the MoFAIC in Lusaka.
- To determine the relationship between workforce diversity and organizational culture practices at the MoFAIC in Lusaka.
- To examine the effect of workforce diversity on organisational culture in public institutions through the MoFAIC in Lusaka.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1. Empirical Review
2.1.1. Existing Diversity Traits in Public Institutions

Hapompwe et al. (2020) conducted a study with a focus on the impact of age and gender diversity on employee performance in a parastatal set up. The study confirmed the existence of some correlation and concluded that depending on how the said diversities are harnessed and managed, they have some implications on work force output. This study conducted by these scholars differ with the current study which is focused on the effect of work force diversity on organizational culture of a public institution.

Many other studies which have been conducted in the recent past have provided some indictment as to the demographic shifts in work force diversities. The current demographic trends indicate that the composition of the workforce is changing in Zambia with remarkable increases in youth participation, gender diversity, and attendant implications (Zambia National Statistical Agency, 2023; Chikonde, 2023, & Mumba, 2022). This in itself requires sufficient attention as it has far telling implications on the work output and service delivery to the public. The work culture is definitely affected by the work force diversities.

Diversity management has become an important issue in organisations due to rapid economic growth and advancement, which necessitated that organisation become more diversified, especially in multiracial and multi-ethnic countries. According to a study by Ankita (2014), it was found that, diversity in an organisation brings humanity, perspective and meaning to the day-to-day employee experience. It creates an environment that allows and encourages people to be themselves at work. Herein, the study revealed that some of the most common diversities in organisations organisational members age, gender, work experience, marital status and educational qualifications. Each of this impact the culture of an organisation and for this reason can affect the atmosphere of the organisation in various ways. The study results concluded that workforce diversity helps members in such a way that it supports overall organisational growth and the various traits of the individual culture affect the organisations differently.

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A study by Goyal (2019) examined one's insights, values, and conduct in such circumstances reflect firmly established beliefs about the idea of relational work connections. The findings of this study stressed that to comprehend and deal with these distinctions requires understanding the idea of labour force variety and what it means for culture within an organisation. The deduction of the study was that, the variation in a workplace is shown in the different characteristics that exist among the labour force and every one of the attributes affect the way of life of the organisation once they intermingle. Accordingly, it is critical that the variety inside a corporation is succeeded so as to not prompt adverse consequences on the way of life of the organisation.

Mallikarjunan (2017) in his study uncovered that, laborforce diversity is a contentious issue in many organisations. According to this research study, it was pointed out that, managers within organisations need to take care in dealing with this diversity assuming the positive culture if an organisation is to be supported. It additionally uncovered, that the absence of mindfulness towards variability among individuals from within the organisation might result in conflicts between the way of life of the corporation and the acquiring variety qualities.

Moreover, Dickson (2019) in their research paper presented that, diversity in a workplace comes in different forms. Regardless of these differences however, diversity among workforce results in positive affects like creativity, problem solving, innovation but on other hand diversity may results in some negative aspects like increasing conflicts, decreasing group performance and decreasing group cohesiveness. To ease the negative effects and challenges brought by diversity, the authors suggested a multi-level model to improve the group performance by considering individual- (i.e., empathy and self-disclosure), and group-level (i.e., communication, group involvement and group trust) mechanisms which underlie the process of learning from one another's identity within a group. In line with the authors, having different cultures is most important for the organisation's culture and is necessary if to create a strong organisation in general.

The above studies have indicated the indicate the relationship between workforce diversity and organisational culture but do not indicate existing workforce diversity traits in public institutions. As such, this leaves a knowledge gap and this study will work to fill in the gap. By finding out the existing workforce diversity traits at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation in Lusaka Zambia.

2.1.2. Relationship between Workforce Diversity and Organizational Culture.

Academic literature recognize the correlation between workforce diversity and organizational culture. In the study by Chanda and Zulu (2022), there is a recognition of such a correlation in that a diverse workforce fosters a collaborative culture within organizations. It encourages inclusivity and mutual respect, thereby leading to enhanced employee engagement and morale, which ultimately enhances organizational productivity, performance and effectiveness. The difference of Chanda and Zulu's study to the current one is that these two scholars focused on "Diversity and Inclusion in Zambian Diplomatic Services: Challenges and Opportunities, while the current study focuses on the diversities and their implications on organizational culture. Moreover, Zhang and Kim (2023) conducted a study on the influence of workforce diversity on organizational culture. This systematic study examined numerous studies to appreciate how workforce diversity influences organizational culture. The findings indicate that diverse teams foster a more inclusive culture, leading to increased creativity and problem-solving capabilities. Nevertheless, the study also points out the potential for conflict if diversity is not managed properly. This study by these two scholars was of course done in a different jurisdiction and was not empirical thereby differentiating it with the current study.

Balaji et al (2020) argued that organisational culture can help drive business results, but it takes a cultural audit to differentiate which elements of culture lead to superior performance. The study revealed that, the shared beliefs and values help individuals understand organizational objectives and thus provide them with norms for conduct in the organization. Organisational culture is considered a strategic advantage for the organization. Herein, the focus of the study was to measure the correlation between employee behaviors and attitudes that define an organization's culture and workforce diversity. The study found discovered that organizational culture was an effective factor that determined whether the organization could obtain outstanding performance or not, it was an effective factor that determined organization's response and attitude to particular incident and external change of environment too. the shortcoming of this study however, is that it did not indicate the connection between organizational culture and workforce diversity. This hence left a knowledge gap that this study will work to fill.

On the other hand, Martinez and Smith (2023) conducted a study focussing on "Diversity and Organizational Culture: The Role of Inclusive Practices." The study investigated how inclusive practices within diverse workforces shape organizational culture. The findings indicate that organizations that actively promote inclusivity tend to have stronger collaborative cultures, which enhances overall employee satisfaction and retention rates.

Due to increased labour mobility, it has become imperative that employers learn how to manage cultural differences and individual work attitudes. As the labour force becomes more diverse, there are both opportunities and challenges to managing employees in a diverse work climate. According to Ely (2015) the prospects of labour or workforce diversity encompass amid others

acquisitioning a viable superiority by espousal variation in the labour force. The encounters on the other hand are effectually handling personnel with unalike insolences, standards, and opinions, in accumulation to evading charge when headship knobs various work status quo indecorously, (Ely, 2015).

With growth in the diversity of organisations works, its interaction with organisational culture is more apparent. Schneider (2017) points out that, organizational culture implies the various "shared values and basic assumptions that explain why organizations do what they do and focus on what they focus on". Quinn (2013) pointed out that, accommodating work diversity in an organisation increases cohesion, collaboration and commitment in the form of teamwork, participation and consensus among members of an organisation and this further strengthens the culture among members.

Ali and Tomas (2021) indicated in his study that, the collaboration between an organisations culture and an effective work diversity encourages members to embrace organizational goals and values. Within such, the organization is like a family or tribe, and communication, knowledge-sharing, loyalty and relationship with employees, customers and suppliers are valued. In the long term according to Janssens and Zanoni (2014) it advances the creation of an ad-hocracy culture that is then characterized by entrepreneurship and innovation. In the long term this culture ensures increased abilities among members of exploiting opportunities, ingenious problem-solving and risk-taking that are valued.

Ultimately, the foregoing studies re-echo the significant impact of workforce diversity on shaping and enhancing organizational culture, emphasizing the need for effective management strategies to leverage diversity positively and therefore achieve organizational objectives.

2.1.3. Effect of Workforce Diversity on Organizational Culture

Lee and Chen (2023) conducted a study titled "Workforce Diversity and Its Impact on Organizational Culture: A Multinational Perspective." The study analysed how labor force diversity influences organizational culture across different multinational companies. The results show that diverse teams contribute to more innovative and adaptable cultures, enhancing overall organizational performance. The study emphasizes the importance of cultural sensitivity and inclusive leadership in maximizing the benefits of diversity.

On the other hand, Patel and Gomez (2023), conducted a study entitled: "The Role of Diversity in Shaping Organizational Culture: Evidence from Tech Companies." The study focused on Tech companies and investigated how diversity initiatives affect organizational culture. The findings indicate that organizations with robust diversity programs experience a shift towards a more inclusive and collaborative culture, which positively impacts employee engagement and retention. The difference in the studies on this sub-topic comes through the one done by Zhang and Kim (2023) which brought out some elements of conflicts as potential impact of workforce diversities. It underscored the fact that diverse teams foster a more inclusive culture, leading to increased creativity and problem-solving capabilities though with the potential for conflict if diversity is not managed properly.

The foregoing studies are all related but different with the focus of the current study. To begin with, the focus of Lee and Chen's (2023) study was on multinational companies while the current one focuses on a public institution. In the same vein, Patel and Gomez's (2023) focus was on Technologies companies while the current study is focusing on a service-based public institution. Finally, Zhang and Kim (2023) focused on the influence of workforce diversity on organizational culture, which was systematic study examining numerous studies to appreciate how workforce diversity influences organizational culture. Besides, all these studies are international in nature and cannot be replicated directly to the Zambian set up.

According to Rainey (2021), organizational diversity may be a source of sustained competitive advantage as it is valuable, rare, un-imitable by competitors, and non-substitutable. As a "business case," diversity is believed to engender competitive advantage by establishing a better corporate image, improving group and organizational performance, and attracting and retaining human capital, (Poutsma, E, 2014). Therefore, regardless of the sector that an organisation operates in, investing in organizational diversity must be acknowledged as an essential undertaking. However, as asserted by Jayne and Dipboye (2014), increasing diversity and diversity management efforts alone does not necessarily lead to positive or higher organizational performance; both, diversity and its management need to be positively valued by the employees in order to harvest the true benefits of diversity. To this effect, if organizations properly manage employees' diverse perceptions, diversity can be a source of growth, learning, and intuition, thus, enhancing organizational performance. The effects of diversity are more positive when both employees and organizations share more favourable views about and attitudes toward diversity.

Building on the above, a study by Selmer (2018) stresses that organizational culture then works as a mechanism of social control that promotes behavioural uniformity and the assimilation of the dominant values. In addition, it was found that, such demand originates high levels of stress in people from minority cultural backgrounds and diversity that want to preserve their identity. The impact hence was that, cultural barriers may prevent members from minority identity groups from developing their full potential

and these barriers can be tangible like the stairs that limit the mobility of people in wheelchairs, or more subtle like the refusal to pay attention to someone's suggestions and opinions because he or she is a member of a minority group.

2.2. Gaps in the Literature

This section has reviewed numerous studies from the local, regional, continental, and global frontline. These studies have given salient insights on the various typologies of diversity traits existent in work environments, the correlation between workforce diversity, and organizational culture, and the effect of workforce diversity on organizational culture. This is in line with studies done in different jurisdictions and organizations as a way of ensuring that sufficient gaps are established for the current study's bridging. Indeed with the multiple literature reviewed a lot of which is very current, there are no studies which have been conducted in the specific topic area of the current study's focus. The study by Hapompwe et al. (2020) focused on the impact of age and gender diversity on employee performance in a parastatal set up and not a pure public institution. Many other studies confirm the current demographic trends which indicate that the composition of the workforce is changing in Zambia with remarkable increases in youth participation, gender diversity, and attendant implications (Zambia National Statistical Agency, 2023; Chikonde, 2023, & Mumba, 2022), though not predicated on a public ministry as in MoFAIC. The work culture is definitely affected by the work force diversities.

All other studies are related to the current one but different with the focus of the current study. To begin with, the focus of Lee and Chen's (2023) study was on multinational companies while the current one focuses on a public institution. In the same vein, Patel and Gomez's (2023) focus was on Technologies companies while the current study is focusing on a service-based public institution. Finally, Zhang and Kim (2023) focused on the influence of workforce diversity on organizational culture, which was systematic study examining numerous studies to appreciate how workforce diversity influences organizational culture. Besides, all these studies are international in nature and cannot be replicated directly to the Zambian set up.

2.3.   Theoretical Frameworks

This study was anchored on three theories:

2.3.1.   Structural Functionalist Theory – Emile Durkheim, (Ritzer, 2016)

Structural Functionalist theory that is also referred to as Functionalism, lays its emphasis on the large-scale social structures, social institutions, their interrelationships, and implications on society. In Structural Functionalism, the terms' structure and function are not necessarily complementary. The basic principles of Structural Functionalism can be comprehended in three simple terms: maintenance of social stability, collective functioning, and social evolution, (Ritzer, 2016). The social structure of society consists of various components such as social institutions, social norms, and values that are interconnected and dependent on each other. The theory further adds that, each component of the structure has a specified role and altogether these social patterns contribute to the balanced and stable functioning of society. Furthermore, social structure adapts to the changing needs of society, if any part of the structure acts dysfunctional then society as a whole might collapse**.** Building on this theory's principle, the interrelations between the parts of an organisation (workforce diversity and organisational culture) may contribute to social unity within an organisation. In the long term this will create an integrated system with life characteristics of its own, exterior to individuals yet driving their behaviour. Thus, this theory will be used to guide the study as it works to assess the impact of workforce diversity on the organizational culture of public institutions in Zambia.

2.3.2.   Social Conflict theory

The Social conflict theory is a Marxist-based social theory which argues that individuals and groups (social classes) within society interact on the basis of conflict rather than consensus, (Rummel, 2016). From an organisational point of view, conflict theorists view conflict as an engine of change, since conflict produces contradictions which are sometimes resolved, creating new conflicts and contradictions in an ongoing dialectic. Within the organisation, different systems interact and these in a bid to gain dominance may become the source of conflict. This conflict may therein become the basis for change and as such, the existing diversity and cultures may affect the overall organisation success in the long and short term.

2.3.3.   Social Identity Theory

This theory was developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1960s and has made tremendous contributions in this field of study. It posits that individuals categorize themselves and others into groups, which influences their behaviours and interactions. It emphasizes the importance of group membership in shaping self-concept and social dynamics. In the context of the current study, the theory is helpful in expounding the fact that diverse teams can create a sense of belonging while also highlighting potential bottlenecks, such as in-group/out-group biases. This understanding is vital for examining how organizational culture can either foster inclusivity or exacerbate divisions.

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2.4. Conceptual Framework

Workforce diversity is a makeup of a variety of components among which include race, education, geographical location, gender, language, ethnicity, professional qualification, occupation, different perception and attitudes. This as such form the differences that exist among employees in an organisation and these influence other members of the organisation that have different traits. Within the organisation is the organisations culture that is member up of common beliefs, values, and norms among others that are agree on and/or regarded as acceptable among members of the organisations. However, as new members come on board, there then exist cultural difference that then have to interact with the obtaining main organisational culture and this is likely to bring about conflict between the two different cultures.

The linkage in the instance is that an organisational culture does not exist in an independent environment but in an environment in which other and otherwise independent cultures that is specific to members are existing. During this process, the interaction processes the more dominant culture tends to pose more influence on the less dominant culture.

On the other, the existing diversities influence the nature of the impact that is whether it will result in positive or negative impacts. Regardless, the outcome is determined by the level of interaction and degree of influence that each of the variables have on the other in both the short term and long term.
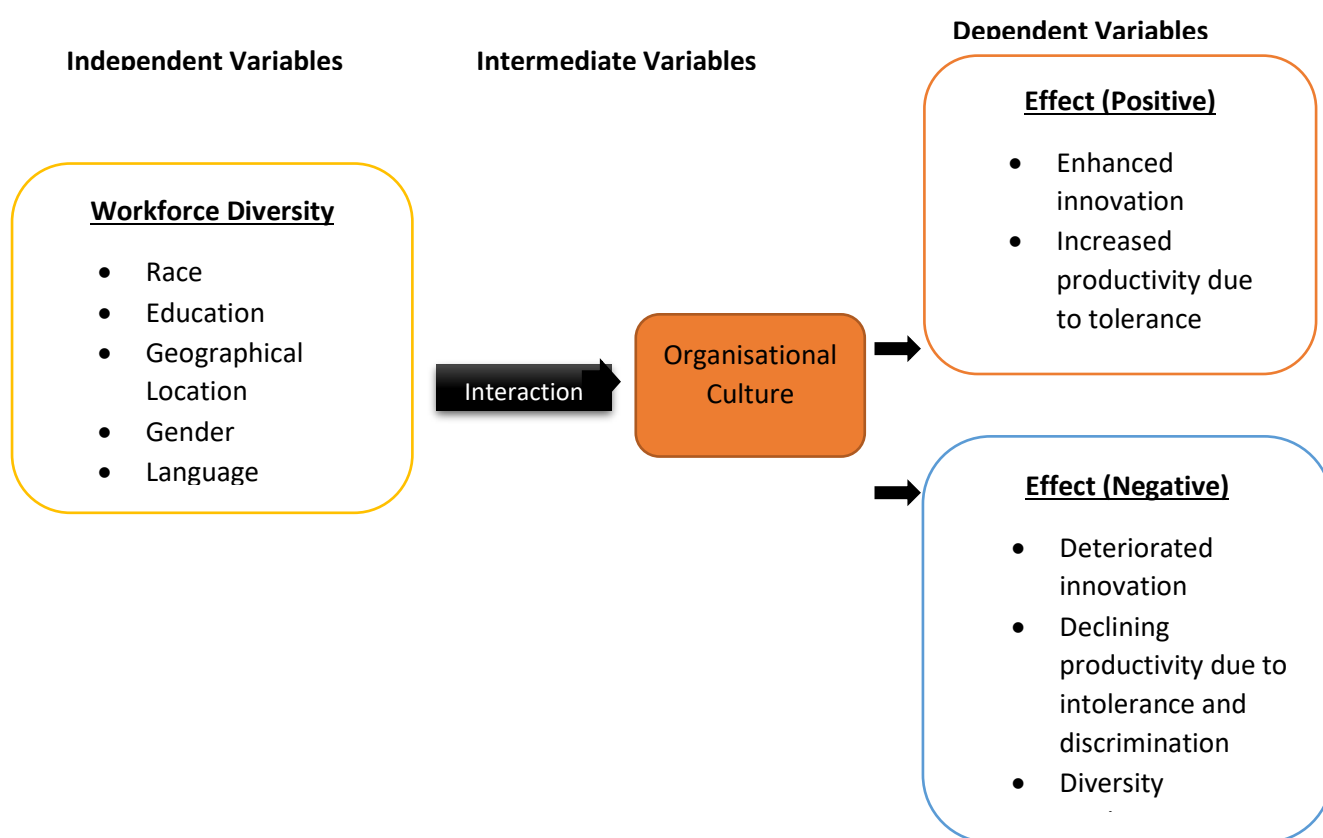

Figure 1 below shows the study's conceptual framework with attendant variables.
Source: Author's Design (2024)

In accordance with the conceptual framework presented above, it can be pointed out that workforce diversity is an independent variable that interacts with organisational culture on different fronts. This interaction brings about two possible impacts which in this case can either be positive or negative impacts depending on the magnitude of the impacts. Herein, the positive interaction is likely to result in Enhanced innovation increased productivity due to tolerance, diversity tolerance, strong organisational culture, high performance and enhanced service delivery among others. On the other hand, in a case that the interaction is negative, it will produce such results within the organisation that will include among others; ddeterioriated innovation, declining productivity due to intolerance and discrimination, diversity intolerance, discrimination, weak organisational culture, low member performance, and poor service delivery among organisational members. On that note, therefore, it is understood that the interaction between workforce diversity and organisational culture can result into either positive and/or negative impacts. As

such, the study will use this relationship as it seeks to assess the impact of workforce diversity on the organizational culture of public institutions in Zambia through a case of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods approach in assessing workforce diversity and its effect on organizational culture at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation in Lusaka. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods, this research aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effect of workforce diversity on organizational culture of public institutions. The quantitative component involves the collection and analysis of numerical data through structured survey questionnaires. This allowed for the identification of significant patterns and relationships among measurable variables, thereby providing insights into the extent and impact of the identified effects (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Complementing this with the qualitative component that included semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders, the study was situated in the pragmatic philosophy. This approach facilitated a deeper analysis of the contextual and experiential aspects of the workforce diversity effect, offering nuanced perspectives that can inform strategies for improving the implementation of diversity policies and strategies (Patton, 2015). The most suitable research philosophy for this study was pragmatism. Pragmatism emphasizes the practical application of research findings and focuses on the problem at hand rather than the methodologies or theoretical underpinnings alone. This philosophy is particularly relevant for studies aiming to address real-world issues, such as the workforce diversity and its effect on organizational culture in public institutions from the Zambian context. Pragmatism allows researchers to use a variety of methods to understand the problem from multiple perspectives, facilitating comprehensive solutions (Creswell, 2014). The study population included MoFAIC employees who were 100 in total as of the 2023 database. The sample size determined by the Cochran Formulae was Fifty (50) with a 90% (45) return rate. The secondary data was from documents, written records, research publications, annual publications from various sources, and any other readily available credible information that the researcher(s) came across including legislative, strategic plans, and policy documents etc. Random and purposive sampling techniques were used. Data were analyzed through SPSS for quantitative and content analysis for qualitative.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Prevalent Workforce Diversity at MoFAIC.

Out of 50 respondents, 45 (90%) acknowledged the presence of workforce diversity, while 5(10%) did not. The dominant response is "yes", indicating that diversity is widely recognized among employees. This suggests that MoFAIC has a varied workforce with employees from different backgrounds, skills, and demographics. The most frequently identified trait was ethnicity (46 responses, 93.3%), followed closely by age (40 responses, 88.9%) and Gender (38 responses, 84.4%). Other notable diversity traits include language (35 responses, 77.8%) and Educational qualifications (30 responses, 66.7%). The least reported diversity traits were Geographical location (20 responses, 44.4%) and other factors such as disability or religion (10 responses, 22.2%). This suggests that workforce diversity at MoFAIC is primarily influenced by professional qualifications, demographics, and language differences rather than geographical origins or other less visible factors. These findings emphasize the need for inclusive policies that leverage diverse skills and backgrounds to enhance organizational culture and work effectiveness.

These findings indicate that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operations in Lusaka exhibits a complex array of diversity traits, including age, gender, educational qualifications, ethnicity, nationality, language, and geographical location. These characteristics align with the broader literature on workforce diversity, which identifies such traits as central to understanding an organization's demographic composition (Gloat, 2024). From a social identity theory perspective (Liu et al, 2023), these traits not only shape individual identities but also form the basis of group affiliations and inter-group dynamics. While the presence of diverse traits can enrich the work-lace by offering a range of perspectives, it may also lead to the formation of in-groups and out-groups if not carefully managed. The structural functionalist theory further supports the notion that each diversity trait plays a specific role in the overall functioning of the organization, contributing to the stability and resilience of the organizational system when effectively integrated.

4.1.1. Relationship between Workforce Diversity and Organizational Culture

Regarding the relationship between workforce diversity and organizational culture, most participants believed that a diverse workforce positively influences the work culture by introducing varied perspectives and innovative problem-solving approaches. They commonly shared that, "diversity is the engine of creativity in our organization, it brings different ideas to the table, "while others noted, "when managed effectively, our diversity really help in addressing challenges from multiple angles, although it does

require more coordination". However, a few interviewees cautioned that without proper management, diversity could present challenges.

The study's second objective which is to determine the relationship between workforce diversity and organizational culture revealed that diversity is both a source of strength and a potential challenge within the ministry. Many respondents noted that the varied backgrounds of employees foster an environment of creativity and innovation, which is consistent with prior research suggesting that diverse teams are better positioned to generate novel ideas and solutions (Gloat, 2024). Social identity theory helps explain these findings by suggesting that when individuals identify with inclusive groups, they are more likely to contribute positively to the organizational culture. However, the findings also echo the premises of social conflict theory, which posits that differences among group members can lead to conflicts if power imbalances or miscommunications arise (Delloitte Insights, 2020). Thus, while workforce diversity can enhance organizational culture by broadening perspectives and driving creative problem-solving, its benefits are contingent upon the existence of robust management practices that mitigate potential conflicts.

4.1.2.   Effect of Diversity on Organizational Culture

The data show that 35 out of 50 respondents (70%) either strongly agree or agree that diversity influences the organizational culture. Only 7 respondents (14%) express a negative view. This indicates that a significant majority believe diversity has favourable impact on the overall culture. This suggests that workforce diversity is largely seen as beneficial to the overall cultural environment of the organization.

The impact of workforce diversity on the ministry's work culture was viewed as largely positive, with many respondents highlighting that diverse teams foster creating and innovative solutions. One interviewee stated, "Our diverse teams often come up with creative solutions that a homogenous group might miss". Yet, some also reported that mismanaged diversity can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts, adversely affecting employment morale. One participant observed, "when diversity issues are not handled well, it can lead to a sense of exclusion and lower morale among affected groups".

The respondents noted a lack of adequate measures to manage workforce diversity. Hence, several measures to manage workforce diversity were noted, including regular diversity training sessions, periodic workshops, and policies aimed at promoting inclusivity. One respondent shared, "we do not have regular training and team building exercises, which can help bridge cultural differences.". there was a call for more proactive strategies, with suggestions such as establishing a dedicated diversity committee to continuously monitor and enhance the management of diversity traits.

In examining the effect of workforce diversity on organizational culture within public institutions, the study confirms that diversity significantly influences the ministry's cultural dynamics. The integration of diverse perspectives was found to contribute positively to decision-making processes and overall organizational effectiveness. This finding is well supported by structural functionalist theory, which posits that every element of an organization has a role that contributes to the system's overall stability and performance (Ashkali, 2020). At the same time, the study highlights the adverse outcomes associated with the mismanagement of diversity, such as reduced by social conflict theory. The tension between the positive contributions of diversity and the challenges it may pose underscores the critical importance of implementing comprehensive diversity management strategies. Such strategies should focus on harnessing the benefits of diversity while proactively addressing the potential for conflict, thereby fostering a more inclusive and supportive organizational culture.

4.2. Study Implications

The study's findings suggest that while workforce diversity at the ministry of foreign affairs and International Co-operation in Lusaka offers considerable potential for enhancing organizational culture, its benefits are maximised only when effectively managed. The theoretical frameworks of social identity, social conflict, and structural functionalism collectively illuminate the complex interplay between diversity traits and organizational culture. When diversity is embraced and integrated through thoughtful policies and practices, it can serve as a catalyst for innovation and improved organizational performance. Equally, without proactive management, diversity may lead to international conflicts and reduced cohesion. The integration of these insights with existing literature provides a comprehensive understanding of how workforce diversity can be leveraged to create a resilient and dynamic organizational culture in public institutions.

5.   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

The study found that workforce diversity at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation in Lusaka is characterised by a range of traits, including differences in age, gender, educational qualifications, ethnicity, nationality, language, and geographical background. These diverse attributes contribute significantly to the overall organizational culture by bringing

varied perspectives and innovative problem-solving approaches. However, the benefits of such diversity are realized only when accompanied by effective management practices, as evident by the positive correlation between well-managed diversity and enhanced employee morale. The integration of theoretical frameworks such as social identity theory, social conflict theory, and structural functionalist theory, provided further insight into these dynamics. Social identity helped explain how individual differences contribute to group identities and the potential for in-group versus out-group dynamics. In contrast, social conflict theory highlighted the potential for tensions and miscommunications when diversity is not adequately managed. Structural functionalism underscored the role of each diversity trait in contributing to the overall stability and functionality of the organization, reinforcing the importance of comprehensive diversity management practices.

Overall, the findings suggest that while workforce diversity is a valuable asset that can drive creativity and innovation, its positive impact is contingent on the implementation of effective management strategies. To harness the full potential of a diverse workforce, public institutions must invest in proactive diversity policies, regular training, and the establishment of dedicated committees to ensure inclusivity and mitigate conflicts. This balanced approach will not only enhance the organizational culture but also contribute to improved performance and sustainability in the long term.

5.2. Recommendations

- The MoFAIC should establish a centralised monitoring system to document and analyse key diversity metrics (e.g., age, gender, education, ethnicity) to ensure inclusivity recruitment and retention practices.
- The MoFAIC should implement regularly diversity training an engagement program that promote awareness, mutual respect, and effective communication among employees, thereby fostering a shared organizational identity.
- The MoFAIC should develop and enforce robust diversity management policies, including the creation of a dedicated diversity committee and periodic policy reviews, to leverage diversity as a strategic asset and mitigate potential conflicts.

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