

PRIMARY RESEARCH

Workforce Diversity and Organisational Performance: Evidence from the Islamic Higher Education Sector

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Workforce diversity, Organisational performance, Ethnic diversity, Age diversity, Islamic perspective.

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examines the effects of workforce diversity dimensions (ethnic and age) on organisational performance within an Islamic university setting. Islamic principles of justice (*adl*), mutual recognition (*ta'aruf*), equality (*musawah*), inclusion (*tadmin*), and community (*ummah*) are employed as the contextual and theoretical lens through which the findings are interpreted rather than as directly measured constructs.

Methods: The study used a cross-sectional survey design. Simple random sampling was employed to select 225 participants for the survey, which comprises academic and non-academic staff of Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria. The questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents. Quantitative data were analysed using multiple regression. Consequently, external validity remains limited and future studies should employ multi-institutional and cross-sectoral designs to enhance generalisability.

Findings: Ethnic diversity significantly influences organisational productivity; specifically, cultural diversity positively affects productivity, whereas language diversity negatively affects it due to possible communication barriers. Furthermore, age diversity significantly contributes to organisational growth by enhancing knowledge and skill sets, although experience did not have a significant effect on growth.

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Significance: The study contributes to workforce diversity literature by providing empirical evidence from an Islamic faith-based university context and demonstrates how diversity outcomes may be interpreted through Islamic ethical principles

Limitations/Implications: The study is confined to a single institution, which may affect generalisability. However, the University should implement structured workforce diversity training programmes grounded in Islamic ethical principles to enhance inclusion and reduce intergroup bias.

KAUJIE Classification: N3, P2

JEL Classification: M14, M10

INTRODUCTION

The concept of workforce diversity has been widely discussed and debated among scholars and experts across academic fields as a voluntary organisational approach to promote an inclusive workplace that values, respects, and leverages employee differences to drive competitive advantages (Lima & Martins, 2025; Sualman et al., 2025). Meanwhile, the Islamic perspective on the concept is grounded in the principles of justice (*adl*), mutual recognition (*ta'aruf*), inclusion (*tadmin*), equality (*musawah*), equity (*eadala*) and multiculturalism (*al-taeadudiat thaqafia*) (Gano et al., 2024). For instance, Islam embraces and values variety in its manifestations, including racial, linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity (Liman et al., 2022). According to Quran 49:13, Allah (*SWT*) created people from various countries and tribes so that they may get to know one another and learn from one another. In this case, workforce diversity in Islamic civilisations is built on the idea of *Ummah*, an Arabic term meaning “community of believers.” The *Ummah* is a multicultural (*al-taeadudiat thaqafia*) society of individuals from many ancestries, cultures, and races. Despite disagreements, the *Ummah* was encouraged to remain and work together (Quran 3:103).

While Islamic teachings provide a normative foundation for managing diversity, the contemporary HR literature emphasises diversity as a strategic resource that influences performance outcomes (Kulshrestha et al., 2025; Lima & Martins, 2025). The integration of these perspectives is particularly relevant in faith-based institutions such as Al-Hikmah University, where religious values coexist with modern organisational

practices. In such contexts, diversity is not only a demographic reality but also an ethical construct that shapes employee interaction, identity, and performance (Nugraheni et al., 2024). However, the idea of social justice, which calls for treating everyone equally and equitably regardless of their socioeconomic standing, race, or ethnicity, is likewise supported by Islam. For instance, Islamic teachings on human rights, which strongly emphasise the defence of the rights of all people, including minorities and oppressed groups, reflect this notion (Alqhaiwi et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, globalisation and competitiveness are creating a more complex work environment, requiring a workforce comprising people of diverse ages, skills, knowledge, and backgrounds to maximise competitive advantage (Silberg et al., 2025). There is still racial discrimination and other forms of discrimination in businesses in the process of recruiting, promoting, and other employer-employee dynamics. Consequently, management faces a significant responsibility to manage its diverse employee population and ensure that it prevents conflicts of interest in implementing its policies and practices (Alotaibi et al., 2022).

The employees in various organisations that are spread across the national borders have discriminatory attitudes and identities, an uncooperative nature and are demoralised due to poor performance indicators. The reason is that the departmental goals supersede the corporate goals and objectives. When the latent value of variety is not properly realised, it negatively affects a company's profitability (Haque et al., 2026). Negative performance measures have been noteworthy, prompting businesses to adopt these principles to boost productivity and profits (Arif & Ahmed, 2023; Koleva, 2021). Unmanaged employee diversity may cause demoralisation, attrition, and create severe communication problems. The negative effects of workforce diversity discussed above are evident in modern business; nevertheless, solutions are needed to enable companies to operate successfully (Naveed et al., 2023).

The existing workforce diversity literature identifies three important gaps (Alqhaiwi et al., 2024; Junaidi, 2024; Nugraheni et al., 2024; Qamar et al., 2026). First, a theoretical gap exists because most studies explain diversity outcomes through secular organisational theories while giving limited attention to faith-based institutions where organisational behaviour is shaped by religious values and ethical norms (Qamar et al., 2026). Second, a contextual gap exists because evidence from Islamic higher education

remains scarce, particularly within Sub-Saharan Africa (Aliyu, 2024). Third, an empirical gap exists because prior findings regarding the effects of ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and age diversity on organisational outcomes remain inconsistent (Aliyu, 2024; Junaidi, 2024). While some studies report positive effects, such as enhanced creativity and knowledge sharing, others report negative outcomes arising from communication barriers and intergroup conflict (Nugraheni et al., 2024). This study addresses these gaps by examining ethnic and age diversity dimensions within an Islamic university perspective and interpreting the findings through the lens of Islamic ethical principles and Social Identity Theory (SIT).

It is important to clarify that the Islamic principles discussed in this study are not operationalised as measurable variables. They serve only as a contextual foundation for interpreting workforce diversity within Islamic higher education. Accordingly, the empirical model focuses exclusively on measurable dimensions of workforce diversity: ethnic and age diversity. Although religion is discussed in the conceptual literature on diversity and in the study's Islamic context, it was not included as an independent variable because no survey items were developed to measure religious diversity. Following the gaps identified, the following research questions are to be answered:

- i. To what extent does ethnic diversity affect organisational productivity?
- ii. To what extent does age diversity affect organisational growth?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Workforce Diversity

Studies have shown that the presence of people with different origins, traits, and experiences inside an organisation is referred to as workforce diversity (Roy, 2022; Turi et al., 2022). These differences may include ethnicity, age, gender, education, religion, language, nationality, and socio-economic background. The concept emphasises recognising, respecting, and effectively managing these differences to create an inclusive and productive work environment (Koleva, 2021; Sualman et al., 2025). Modern organisations increasingly recognise diversity as a strategic resource that can enhance creativity, innovation, and decision-making. When employees from different backgrounds collaborate, they bring unique perspectives and ideas that contribute to improved organisational performance (Elkhwesky et al., 2026). However, managing diversity also requires deliberate policies and practices to prevent discrimination, conflict, and inequality (Silang et al., 2026). However, Arif and Ahmed (2023) categorise workforce diversity into primary dimensions (such as age, ethnicity, gender, and race) and secondary dimensions (such as education, experience, and marital status). Based on this study, ethnicity and age diversity are primary dimensions because they are visible characteristics that significantly influence interpersonal relationships and workplace dynamics (Patnaik & Shukla, 2021; Philippou, 2022).

Ethnic Diversity: The representation and inclusion of employees from diverse ethnic backgrounds within an organisation. Ethnic diversity refers to the representation of employees from different ethnic groups characterised by shared ancestry, cultural heritage, traditions, historical experiences, language patterns and collective identity (Al-Sahari et al., 2021). Although ethnic identity may influence cultural practices and social interactions, ethnicity is conceptually distinct from religion, which concerns systems of belief, spiritual affiliation, and religious practices (Haque et al., 2026).

Age Diversity: Age diversity refers to the presence of employees from different age groups working together within an organisation. In modern workplaces, it is common to find multiple generations working side by side (Silberg et al., 2025). Typical age groups in organisations may include Gen Z, the youngest workforce members who are technologically oriented and adaptable; Millennials (Gen Y), known for innovation, collaboration, and digital skills; Gen X, often characterised by experience,

independence, and managerial capabilities; and Baby Boomers, typically valued for their extensive experience and institutional knowledge (Silang et al., 2026).

Islamic Perspectives of Workplace Diversity

Islam supports workplace diversity and advocates the inclusion of people from all racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. The Quran 49:13 asserts, "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted". As a result, Islam outright forbids discrimination based on race, gender, or ethnicity (Taser-Erdogan, 2022). Islam also emphasises the need for respect and understanding among people of various origins (Isiaka & Aliyu, 2019). This implies that companies should foster a workplace that is accepting of all staff members, regardless of their cultural or religious heritage. Islam also supports the growth of knowledge and skills via instruction and training. This implies that firms should provide equal opportunity for all workers to learn and flourish regardless of origin or race. Islam bases its concept of workforce diversity on equality, respect for others, and inclusion (Liman et al., 2022). It facilitates the development of skills and knowledge for all workers and supports a work environment free from discrimination. However, the practical application shows that Al-Hikmah University provides prayer spaces for daily prayers and adjusts work hours during Ramadan to allow for breaking the fast.

Organisational Performance

Organisational performance refers to an organisation's ability to achieve its goals and objectives efficiently and effectively. Meanwhile, organisational performance is crucial to any institution's success, including Al-Hikmah University (Silberg et al., 2026). The University aims to provide quality education to its students, conduct research, and contribute to societal development. To achieve its goals, the University focuses on various aspects of organisational performance. Olu-Ogunleye and Akanji (2025) observed that most faith-based Universities strive to maintain high academic standards and provide quality education to their students. This is also peculiar to Al-Hikmah University, which has a team of experienced, qualified faculty members committed to delivering high-quality education to students.

However, organisational performance from an Islamic perspective is based on the principles of justice, accountability, and ethical conduct. In Islam, the concept of performance is not limited to financial or economic performance but also includes social, environmental, and spiritual performance (Alotaibi et al., 2022). The goal of organisational performance in Islam is to achieve success in this world and the hereafter. Islamic teachings emphasise the importance of justice in all aspects of life, including business and organisational practices. Organisations are expected to treat their employees, customers, and stakeholders fairly (Al-Sahari et al., 2021). This includes providing fair wages, benefits, and opportunities for growth and development.

Accountability is another important principle in Islamic organisational performance. Organisations are accountable to their stakeholders, including shareholders, employees, customers, and the wider community (Koleva, 2021). They are expected to be transparent in their operations and to take responsibility for their actions. Ethical conduct is also a key aspect of Islamic organisational performance. Organisations are expected to conduct their business in accordance with Islamic values and principles. This includes avoiding unethical practices such as fraud, corruption, and exploitation. In addition to these principles, Islamic organisational performance also emphasises social responsibility and environmental sustainability (Silberg et al., 2025). Organisations are expected to contribute to the wider community's well-being and protect the environment (Awuah-Gyawu et al., 2025).

Despite extensive studies on workforce diversity and organisational performance, three gaps remain. First, most studies adopt secular frameworks that integrate religious or ethical perspectives only to a limited extent. Second, empirical evidence from faith-based institutions in developing countries remains scarce (Arif & Ahmed, 2023; Koleva, 2021). Third, existing studies rarely examine how Islamic ethical principles interact with dimensions of diversity, such as ethnicity and age, to influence organisational outcomes. This study addresses these gaps by providing an integrated empirical analysis within an Islamic institutional context.

Theoretical Framework

Social Identity Theory (SIT)

Tajfel and Turner (1979) provided a theoretical understanding of how individuals derive part of their identity from their membership in social groups. SIT explains how individuals derive part of their identity from their membership in social groups. The

theory posits that individuals categorise themselves and others into groups (e.g., gender, ethnicity, profession, nationality), and that this categorisation influences attitudes, behaviour, and perceptions within social and organisational contexts (Mahdi-Abaker et al., 2023). According to the theory, individuals strive to maintain a positive social identity by favorably comparing their in-group (the group they belong to) with out-groups (groups they do not belong to) (Abudaqqa, 2024). This comparison can lead to in-group favoritism and out-group bias, which significantly influence workplace interactions, group cohesion, and decision-making processes.

Meanwhile, the theory's primary purpose is to explain how group membership influences individual identity and intergroup behaviour. Meanwhile, scholars have argued that individuals act not only as independent actors but also as members of social groups whose identities shape their behaviour (Alotaibi et al., 2022; Taser-Erdogan, 2022). For example, one major criticism is that the theory tends to emphasise intergroup competition and conflict. This is supported by Nguyen et al. (2022), who argue that not all group interactions lead to discrimination or bias, and that individuals often cooperate across group boundaries. Therefore, the theory provides valuable insights into how diversity and group identity affect organisational performance. When employees strongly identify with their organisation, they tend to exhibit higher levels of engagement, loyalty, and motivation, which positively influence productivity and organisational effectiveness.

Hypothesis Development

The concept of workforce diversity has been studied by many scholars, with varied results. For instance, Qamar et al. (2026) propose that ethnic diversity may enhance organisational productivity, as diverse teams contribute different knowledge, experiences, and perspectives. The differences contribute to better decision-making and organisational performance by increasing the ability to solve problems and become more creative. As Silberg et al. (2026) demonstrate, ethnically diverse teams tend to have greater skill and idea diversity, which can positively impact collaboration, knowledge sharing, and productivity. On the same note, Turi et al. (2022) find that organisations with greater ethnic diversity are better positioned to outperform competitors in financial performance, suggesting a positive correlation between organisational performance and diversity. Nevertheless, Ganaly et al. (2024) suggest that other difficulties ethnic diversity might impose on teams include communication

barriers, interpersonal conflict, and social categorisation. Such problems can lower cohesion, and when not handled well, productivity can be diminished. In this way, the literature yields contradictory results, although many studies indicate a positive correlation between ethnic diversity and productivity when workforce diversity is effective. Hence, the following hypotheses are formulated in null form:

H0₁: Ethnic diversity does not significantly affect organisational productivity

Likewise, age diversity may positively impact organisational development, as employees of different ages bring diverse experiences, visions, and skill sets, as identified in earlier research. Indicatively, Showkat and Misra (2022) found that younger employees can offer technological expertise and creativity, whereas older employees can offer experience, institutional expertise, and strategic insights. According to Khan and Javaid (2023), age, among other diversity attributes, is a very important factor that affects organisational productivity and performance. This implies that organisations with diverse age groups can enhance problem-solving and knowledge exchange. Moreover, intergenerational teamwork may promote organisational learning, mentorship, and knowledge transfer, thereby contributing to long-term organisational development (Roy, 2022; Elamin et al., 2024). However, other problems that can arise due to age diversity include generational conflict, differences in work values, communication skills, and resistance to change. Such aspects can undermine teamwork and organisational effectiveness when not handled appropriately. Thus, the available literature indicates that age diversity may facilitate the development of organisations, but requires an appropriate management plan to reduce potential conflicts. Hence, the following hypotheses are formulated in null form:

H0₂: Age diversity does not significantly affect organisational growth

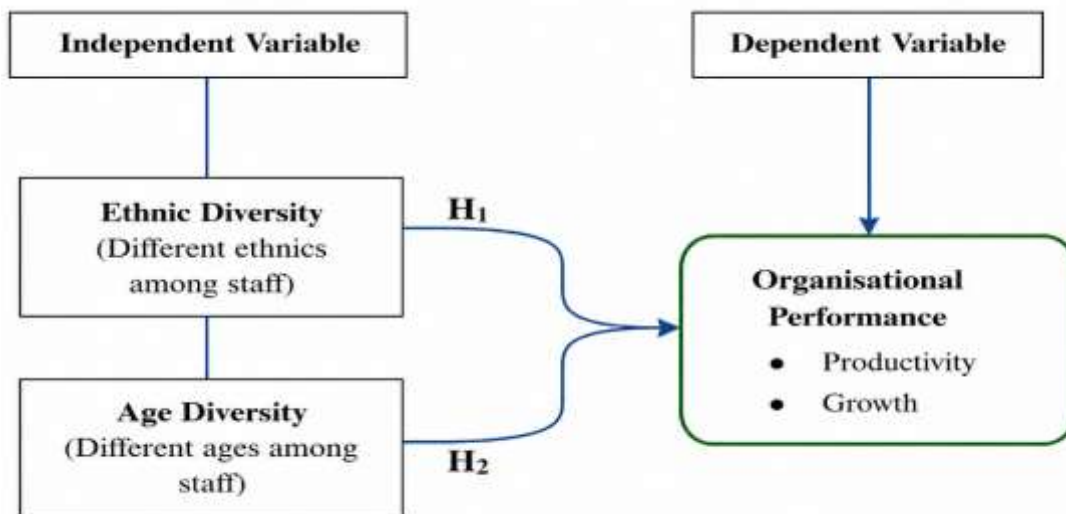


FIGURE 1: Conceptual Framework (Authors' concept, 2026)

Figure 1 illustrates a conceptual framework of the relationship between workforce diversity and organisational performance at Al-Hikmah University, examined through an Islamic perspective. Ethnic and age diversity are independent variables in this model, which are crucial dimensions of workforce diversity among university workers. These dimensions represent the diversity of staff in terms of cultural background and age gaps, which are becoming more prominent in modern institutions of higher learning. In this study, the Islamic perspective does not function as a moderating variable in the empirical model. Rather, it provides the contextual and theoretical lens through which the constructs are interpreted (Awuah-Gyawu et al., 2025; Koleva, 2021). Organisational performance (productivity and growth) is the model's dependent variable, which assumes that ethnic and age diversity, when properly handled in accordance with Islamic ethical principles, positively affects employee work fulfilment.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research had a survey research design. The survey design was deemed suitable because it allows the researcher to collect quantitative data from a specified population at a single point in time to test relationships between variables. The cross-sectional design of the survey ensured that the data were collected efficiently and cost-effectively, without manipulating any variables, and that respondents remained in their natural environment (Aliyu & Maphala, 2026). A total of 541 employees of Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Kwara State, formed the target population. The sample comprised

academic and non-academic staff members at the University during the study period. This population was deemed suitable because the study's variables of interest are directly related to university employees. Taro Yamane's (1976) formula of sample size calculation in a finite population was used to determine the sample size:

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

$$n = \frac{541}{1 + 541(0.05)^2} = 230$$

Although Yamane's formula suggested a minimum sample size of 230 respondents, 216 valid responses were obtained, representing a response rate of 96% of the distributed questionnaires and approximately 40% of the total population. Previous methodological literature indicates that samples of 200 or more observations are generally adequate for multiple regression analysis with a limited number of predictors (Saunders et al., 2019). Consequently, the final sample size remained sufficient for the statistical procedures employed. A simple random sampling method was used in the study. The selected probability sampling technique ensured that all population members had equal and independent opportunities to be selected (Saunders et al., 2019).

The structured questionnaire was used to collect data in line with the study's objectives and the available literature. The questionnaire was divided into two major parts: Section A (Demographic variables), which did not include religious affiliation because religion was not treated as an empirical variable in the study. Section B (Items measuring the study variables, in Likert-type scale format). Experts were used to review the instrument to achieve content and face validity. The questionnaire items were reviewed by specialists in the corresponding field of investigation and in research methodology and analysed for clarity, relevance, suitability, and adequacy in covering the study constructs. The Cronbach's Alpha values for the study constructs were above the acceptable level of 0.70, indicating good reliability and consistency of the measurement instrument (Aliyu & Maphala, 2026). A demographic analysis of respondents was conducted to provide insights into the sample's characteristics, including age, gender, education level, and years of experience (see Table 1). This ensures representativeness and supports the validity of the findings.

The questionnaire was given electronically through Google Forms. The online survey was sent via WhatsApp, with assistance from the HoDs at Al-Hikmah University, to

provide staff members with access. The data obtained were coded and exported from Google Forms into SPSS v30 for analysis. Descriptive statistics as well as inferential statistics were used. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. A rule of decision was to reject the null hypothesis when the p-value was less than 0.05 and fail when the p-value was greater than 0.05.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents descriptive and inferential analyses of the research questions regarding the general opinions of the n=225 participants who volunteered for the study. A sample size of 230 was initially calculated using Yamane's formula. However, 225 questionnaires were distributed, and 216 valid responses were collected and analysed.

TABLE 1: Socio-Demographic of the Respondents

Variables	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	122	56.5
	Female	94	43.5
Age	18–34	98	45.4
	35–44	70	32.4
	45–54	26	12.0
	55 years and above	22	10.2
Highest Educational Qualification	NCE/OND	10	4.6
	BSc./HND	84	38.9
	Postgraduate	122	56.5
Years of Experience	0–3 years	84	38.9
	4–6 years	70	32.4
	7–10 years	36	16.7
	11 years and above	26	12.0
	Total	216	100.0

Note: NCE = National Certificate in Education. OND = Ordinary National Diploma. HND = Higher National Diploma. BSc. = Bachelor of Science

Source: Researcher's Computation via SPSS output, 2026

The research involved 216 respondents. The gender distribution was slightly male-dominated, with 122 males (56.5%) and 94 females (43.5%). Although males constitute the majority, females are also well represented, indicating a balanced gender composition. Regarding age, most respondents are between 18 and 34 years (45.4%), followed by 35-44 years (32.4%). Smaller proportions are participants aged 45-54 years (12.0%) and 55 years and older (10.2%). This implies that it is comprised mostly of young and middle-aged adults, with more than three-quarters (77.8%) aged 45 and below. The prevalence of younger respondents could be significant for views, flexibility, and experience levels, as the research indicates. Regarding education, 56.5% have a postgraduate background, and 38.9% have a BSc/HND. Only 4.6% have NCE/OND qualifications. This implies that the sample is highly educated, with a very high percentage (95.4) having a bachelor's degree. The high percentage of postgraduate qualifications can be a positive factor in the group's knowledge, analytical ability, and professionalism. In terms of years of experience, the largest group (38.9%) comprises 0-3 years, followed by 32.4% for 4-6 years. Smaller groups are represented by those with 7-10 years (16.7%) and 11 years and above (12.0%). This suggests that most respondents (71.3%) have less than 6 years of experience, indicating a relatively young workforce. A high level of education and comparatively fewer years of experience may indicate a new entrant to the profession, suggesting an expanding or changing discipline.

Descriptive Analysis

TABLE 2: Ethnic Diversity and Organisational Productivity

Ethnic Diversity Construct	SD %	D %	U %	A %	SA %	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ethnic diversity in my organisation enhances overall productivity	4.6	1.6	16.2	13.4	63.9	4.30	1.098
Teams with diverse ethnic backgrounds generate more innovative solutions.	16.2	6	11.6	18.5	47.7	3.75	1.497
Ethnic diversity improves collaboration and problem-solving in the workplace.	21.8	8.8	7.4	17.6	44.4	3.54	1.622
My organisation effectively leverages ethnic diversity to improve performance	19.4	9.3	11.1	17.1	43.1	3.55	1.572

Employees from different ethnic backgrounds contribute equally to organisational success.	11.6	4.2	14.8	15.3	54.2	3.96	1.380
Valid N (listwise)	216						

Source: Researcher's Computation via SPSS output, 2026

Table 2 presents employees' perceptions of the relationship between ethnic diversity and organisational productivity. The highest-rated statement was "Ethnic diversity in my organisation enhances overall productivity" (Mean = 4.30, SD = 1.098), with 77.3% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing. Similarly, respondents acknowledged that employees from different ethnic backgrounds contribute equally to organisational success (Mean = 3.96, SD = 1.380), with 69.5% expressing agreement. The statement "Teams with diverse ethnic backgrounds generate more innovative solutions" recorded a mean score of 3.75 (SD = 1.497), with 66.2% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. Furthermore, respondents moderately agreed that ethnic diversity improves collaboration and problem-solving in the workplace (Mean = 3.54, SD = 1.622) and that the organisation effectively leverages ethnic diversity to improve performance (Mean = 3.55, SD = 1.572). Although these items received comparatively lower mean scores, the results still suggest a generally favourable perception of diversity management practices and their contribution to organisational productivity in the Islamic university context.

TABLE 3: Age diversity and organisational growth

Age Diversity constructs	SD %	D %	U %	A %	SA %	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age diversity in my organisation contributes to long-term growth.	19.9	6.9	10.6	11.6	50.9	3.67	1.608
Collaboration between younger and older employees improves organisational performance.	7.9	12	17.1	14.4	48.6	3.84	1.353
Different age groups bring valuable perspectives that support innovation	13.4	2.3	13.9	25.9	44.4	3.86	1.368
My organisation benefits from the experience of older employees and the creativity of younger ones.	16.2	6	12	18.1	47.7	3.75	1.498
Age diversity strengthens knowledge sharing and skill development in the organisation.	21.8	8.3	8.8	12	49.1	3.58	1.646
Valid N (listwise)	216						

Source: Researcher's Computation via SPSS output, 2026

Table 3 presents respondents' perceptions of the relationship between age diversity and organisational growth. The highest-rated item was "Different age groups bring valuable perspectives that support innovation" (Mean = 3.86, SD = 1.368), with 70.3% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. Similarly, respondents agreed that collaboration between younger and older employees improves organisational performance (Mean = 3.84, SD = 1.353), with 63.0% expressing agreement. The statement "My organisation benefits from the experience of older employees and the creativity of younger ones" recorded a mean score of 3.75 (SD = 1.498), indicating that respondents generally recognise the complementary strengths of different age groups. Likewise, age diversity was perceived to contribute to long-term organisational growth (Mean = 3.67, SD = 1.608), with 62.5% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. Although comparatively lower, the item "Age diversity strengthens knowledge sharing and skill development in the organisation" also received a favourable mean score (Mean = 3.58, SD = 1.646), suggesting that employees acknowledge the role of age-diverse workforces in facilitating learning and capability development. Thus, the results demonstrate a positive perception of age diversity within the organisation. Employees believe that age diversity enhances organisational growth.

Test of Hypothesis

TABLE 4: Ethnic diversity does not significantly affect organisational productivity

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Est		
1	.761 ^a	.579	.573	.488		
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	72.257	3	24.086	101.136	.000 ^b
	Residual	52.632	221	.238		
	Total	124.889	224			
Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardised Coefficients Beta	Std. Error	Standardised Coefficients Beta	T-stat	Sig.
1	(Constant)	-7.714	.844		-9.139	.000
	culture	.818	.070	.844	11.675	.000
	language	-.566	.073	-.765	-7.749	.000

a. DV: organisational productivity

b. IV: culture, language

Source: Researcher's Computation via SPSS output, 2026

Table 4 shows that the regression model shows a strong relationship between ethnic diversity variables and organisational productivity. The model produced a multiple correlation coefficient ($R = 0.761$), indicating a strong association between the predictors and the dependent variable. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.579$) suggests that approximately 57.9% of the variation in organisational productivity is explained by culture and language. After adjusting for the number of predictors, the Adjusted $R^2 = 0.573$, indicating that the model retains substantial explanatory power and is not overly inflated. The ANOVA results show that the regression model is statistically significant. The model produced $F(3,221) = 101.136$, $p < 0.001$, indicating that the predictors collectively explain a significant proportion of the variance in organisational productivity. This implies that the set of ethnic diversity variables significantly contributes to the prediction of organisational productivity.

Culture shows a positive and statistically significant relationship with organisational productivity ($B = 0.818$, $\beta = 0.844$, $t = 11.675$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that increases in cultural diversity are associated with higher organisational productivity. Language exhibits a negative and statistically significant relationship with organisational productivity ($B = -0.566$, $\beta = -0.765$, $t = -7.749$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that language diversity may introduce communication barriers that negatively influence productivity. However, the model indicates that ethnic diversity explains a substantial proportion of the variation in organisational productivity; hence, we rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternative hypothesis that ethnic diversity significantly affects the organisational productivity of Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin.

TABLE 5: Age diversity does not significantly affect organisational growth

Model		R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Est	
1		.687 ^a	.471	.464	.588	
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	76.640	3	22.652	65.319	.000 ^b
	Residual	67.955	221	.347		
	Total	144.596	224			
Coefficients						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		Beta	Std. Error	Beta	T-stat	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.419	.456		3.118	.002
	Experience	-.126	.088	-.094	-1.401	.163

Knowledge	.434	.118	.277	3.693	.000
Skillset	.408	.065	.516	6.337	.000

a. DV: organisational growth

b. IV: skillset, experience, knowledge

Source: Researcher's Computation via SPSS output, 2026

Table 5 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis examining whether age–diversity–related factors (experience, knowledge, and skill set) significantly influence organisational growth. The regression model produced a correlation coefficient ($R = 0.687$), indicating a moderately strong positive relationship between the independent variables (experience, knowledge, and skill set) and organisational growth. The R^2 value of 0.471 indicates that approximately 47% of the variation in organisational growth is explained by the model's predictors. After adjusting for the number of predictors, the Adjusted R^2 is 0.464, suggesting that the model retains strong explanatory power with minimal shrinkage.

The ANOVA results show that the regression model is statistically significant ($F = 65.319$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that the predictors collectively provide a significant explanation of organisational growth, suggesting the model performs better than one without predictors. Experience shows a negative but statistically insignificant relationship with organisational growth ($\beta = -0.094$, $t = -1.401$, $p = 0.163$). This suggests that variations in experience do not significantly predict organisational growth within this model. Knowledge has a positive and statistically significant effect on organisational growth ($\beta = 0.277$, $t = 3.693$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that higher levels of knowledge within the workforce contribute significantly to improved organisational growth. Skillset exhibits the strongest positive influence on organisational growth ($\beta = 0.516$, $t = 6.337$, $p < 0.001$). This implies that employees' skills play a major role in driving organisational growth.

Although the model is statistically significant, the hypothesis that age diversity has no effect on organisational growth is partially supported, as experience (a proxy for age diversity) is not a significant predictor of organisational growth. Although one dimension (experience) was not significant, the overall model is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it is concluded that age diversity significantly affects organisational growth, primarily through knowledge and skillset.

The results indicate that ethnic diversity, measured through cultural and language dimensions, plays an important role in organisational productivity. Both dimensions included in the model, culture and language, were statistically significant predictors of

organisational productivity. Organisational productivity is positively associated with culture, suggesting that cultural richness can enhance performance. Language diversity, however, shows a negative correlation, suggesting that a language barrier can impede effective communication and reduce productivity unless properly managed. These results are consistent with earlier empirical studies by Silberg et al. (2025), who discovered that socio-cultural diversity has a significant impact on organisational performance. The existing findings support the claim that ethnic diversity, when properly managed, can make an organisation more productive. Nevertheless, the negative value of language adds complexity, suggesting that although diversity can be positive, communication issues must be resolved to ensure its advantages are fully realised (Arif & Ahmed, 2023; Lilli, 2023).

The findings show that age diversity (in terms of experience, knowledge and skill set) has a significant influence on organisational growth. The regression model is statistically significant, indicating that age diversity is a significant factor in growth outcomes. On the personal dimension, knowledge and skillset are found to be significant positive contributors to organisational growth. This implies that age diversity in knowledge and complementary skill bases increases growth potential. Nonetheless, experience was not significant and therefore does not play a significant part in motivating growth in the model. These results are, in part, consistent with Philippou's (2022) previous studies, which found that age diversity is a significant factor in firm development. Although the current research finds substantial impact from age diversity, the insignificance of the experience factor suggests that development can be based on dynamic capabilities (knowledge and skills) rather than on tenure or years of service (Koleva, 2021; Sualman et al., 2025). It builds on previous results by emphasising the most important aspects of age diversity.

Because the study was conducted within an Islamic university environment, the findings may be interpreted through selected Islamic ethical principles. For example, the positive effects of cultural and religious diversity are broadly consistent with the Islamic values of mutual recognition (*ta'aruf*) and community cohesion (*ummah*) (Aliyu, 2024). However, these interpretations should be viewed as contextual rather than empirical because Islamic principles were not directly measured in the study. Consequently, the findings primarily provide evidence regarding workforce diversity

outcomes, while Islamic ethics serve as a theoretical lens for understanding these outcomes within the institutional setting.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the effects of ethnic diversity and age diversity on organisational performance within an Islamic university setting. The findings demonstrate that cultural diversity positively influences organisational productivity, whereas language diversity presents challenges that may affect productivity through communication barriers. Furthermore, knowledge and skill diversity associated with age differences positively contribute to organisational growth, whereas experience was not a significant predictor. This corresponds to the Quranic doctrine that diversity reflects the wisdom of Allah and the way of learning and co-operation (Qur'an 49:13; Quran 3:103). Therefore, cultural diversity, interpreted in light of the Islamic principles of justice, mutual recognition, and inclusion, represents an important organisational resource when managed effectively. On the same note, language diversity was linked to lower productivity, suggesting that poorly managed communication barriers can weaken productivity. This observation raises a critical point: although diversity is a source of competitive advantage, inadequate communication systems may undermine it. Diversity, therefore, does not necessarily imply performance; instead, it must be complemented by intentional, encompassing management practices.

Also, age-based knowledge and skill sets played a significant positive role in growth, suggesting that intellectual resources and complementary skills are the driving forces behind innovation and growth. Experience, on the other hand, was not statistically significant, suggesting that experience without continuous skill development may not be a major driver of organisational growth. This also builds on previous findings, demonstrating that growth is contingent on dynamic capabilities, knowledge acquisition, and other pertinent skills, rather than being directly dependent on years of service. However, its success will be grounded in strategic management practices that leverage cultural and religious opportunities, address communication pitfalls, and focus on continuous enhancement of knowledge and skills. The findings provide partial support for SIT, while diversity dimensions influenced organisational outcomes, the results suggest that positive organisational effects emerge when diverse groups successfully exchange knowledge and collaborate despite demographic differences.

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to workforce diversity literature by extending the application of SIT within a higher education setting. The findings suggest that demographic differences do not uniformly affect organisational outcomes. While cultural and religious diversity contribute positively to productivity, language diversity may generate communication barriers consistent with SIT's explanation of subgroup formation and intergroup differentiation. Similarly, age-related knowledge and skill diversity contribute positively to organisational growth, suggesting that such diversity can generate beneficial outcomes when complementary capabilities are effectively integrated. These findings refine existing diversity literature by demonstrating that different diversity dimensions may produce distinct organisational consequences rather than uniformly positive or negative effects.

Practical Implications

The findings provide actionable insights for university administrators and HR practitioners. Institutions should develop inclusive diversity policies grounded in Islamic ethics; implement language support systems and communication training; promote intergenerational knowledge sharing programs; and focus on skills development rather than tenure-based advancement. The University should implement structured workforce diversity training programmes grounded in Islamic ethical principles to enhance inclusion and reduce intergroup bias. Also, management should introduce a common institutional communication policy (official language guidelines) to minimise language-related productivity loss. Cross-generational mentoring programmes should be established to facilitate knowledge transfer between older and younger employees.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is subject to several limitations. First, the use of cross-sectional data limits causal inference. Second, the study is confined to a single institution, which may affect generalisability. Third, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce response bias. Future research should consider longitudinal designs, comparative studies across multiple universities, and the inclusion of additional diversity dimensions such as gender and educational diversity. Furthermore, future studies could explore mediating variables such as leadership style and organisational culture.

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