

# Demographic Characteristics and Workers' Performance in Public Service in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** - There has been persistent poor performance among workers in Nigerian public organisations and Cross River State in particular over the years. The trend is exacerbated by changes in demographic variables. Previous studies have focused more attention on staff performance appraisal, commitment and job involvement with less attention paid to the influence of demographic characteristics (such as age, gender, marital status, work experience and educational level) on workers' performance. This study therefore, examined the extent to which demographic characteristics predisposed workers' performance in some selected public service in Cross River State, Nigeria. The survey design of *ex-post facto* was employed and the study was guided by five research questions and hypotheses. A total of 1,068 respondents were randomly selected to represent the entire population of public servants in Cross River State. Participants were 584 males and 484 females. Two validated instruments namely: Demographic Characteristics and Workers' Performance scales was validated was used in collecting data for the study. The reliability co-efficient of 0.86 was obtained using test-retest method and Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis. Data was analyzed using percentage count, weight mean and Analysis of Variance statistics. The results showed that demographic characteristics significantly influence performance of workers in public service. By implications, the results of the study attest to the fact that even though workers' performance may be influenced by other factors as portrayed by many scholars, performances of workers are equally affected by their demographic characteristics. Hence, adequate consideration should be given to employee personal characteristics in motivating them to a higher performance level. This study could be useful to government and human resource administrators as a measure of employee performance.

**Keywords:** Demographic Characteristics, Workers' Performance and Public Service.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Public service in Nigeria is with large personnel. Their major function is to implement government policies and programmes. The extent to which this function can be achieved depends greatly on the level of performance of the workers in the public service. Hence, their performance is consequently important criterion that relates to the organizational outcomes and success. No organisation can exist unless its workers are highly productive (Olorunsola, 2012). Therefore, workers' performance is a sensible indication of the success or failure of an organization. Since workers are the key agents in the realization of government

goals and service delivery, they face high expectations, new roles, demand and high level of performance. For instance, in Cross River state, the public service has undergone great transformations in terms of policy formation and internal restructuring in order to reposition the state economically (Bassey & Omori, 2015). This implies, much is expected from average public servants in the state in terms of quality service delivery. However, observably, most of the workers in the public service are finding it very difficult to adjust and adapt to the changes in the organization. Their optimal performance which covers both task and contextual activities has been observed to be very low and weak. It is pertinent to reiterate that many public servants have been seen to have poor attitude to work, uncommitted or nonchalant and lack zeal to work among others. Many factors have been found to influence a worker's performance, either positively or negatively. Such factors include environment, motivation, organizational structure and personal issues to mention but a few. Age, race and ethnicity, sex, marital status, geographical region and educational attainment are some of the personal characteristics that determine optimal workers' performance. Studies such as Schmidt (1990), Owolabi (2005), Shultz and Adam (2007) and Thomas and Feldman (2009) submit that age, gender, work experience and education attainment are among personal factors that influence workers' performance.

Demographic characteristics are described by age, gender, marital status, years of working experience and education attainment. Age plays a role in describing how an individual changes over time and subsequently may affect how performance changes over time. Smedley and Whitten (2006) submit that differences in age could be a potential factor for work performance. Salthouse (1997) observed that age is associated with decreases in performance on tests of learning, memory, reasoning, spatial abilities, and psychomotor speed and may also affect performance through motivation. This implies that increased in age causes deterioration in abilities, such as speed, adaptability, effectiveness, motor coordination and strength. Age can negatively affect worker performance due to the demands of the twenty-first century work place. Considering the complexities of today's world of work, permeated with technology that contributes to effective execution of tasks, team work that contributes to productive working relationships and outcomes that demands workers with high

competencies. We live in a world where things change constantly and rapidly, hence, yesterday's good active workers are not today's best workers. Darwin (2014) posited that as most young workers grew up in a high technological world, having workforce with tech-savvy younger workers would provide great advantage over the older workers. Corroborating this point, the research observed that older workers find it very difficult to adjust to the new world of workplace which is characterised by technology and competitiveness. For instance, computing students' result using internet-based computer has slow down the pace of work of many older workers in the higher institution in Nigeria. This is because most of the older workers are not used to internet-computer system and age is not on side to catch up with the younger workers. Also most of them that occupied top positions in the work place their publications are not visible in either Google citation nor Research gate and this has endanger most higher institutions in Nigeria in the record of world class universities. Knowledge of ICT has become very imperative in order to be a competitive member of the global community. However, empirical work of Judge and Locke (1993) demonstrates a negative relationship between age, ambition, aspirations and overall motivation. In a study carried out by Shultz and Adam (2007) revealed that there were significant differences between age groups concerning work performance. Invariably, Ng and Feldman (2008) study revealed that age was not significantly related to core task performance but was related positively to citizenship behaviour and negatively to counter-productive behaviour. Their study further observed that there are no significant age differences between younger and older workers in terms of core task performance. An empirical study by McDaniel and Pesta (2012) showed a U-Shaped relationship between age and job performances. In the same vein, Timar (2014) reported a curvilinear relationship between employee's age on a horizontal axis and job performance represented on the vertical axis. Given this position, it is likely that workers' performance decline by age based on the types of job activities.

Gender is a set of characteristics distinguishing between male and female. Gender difference in labour market has been an important analysis constitute among labour economist. Researchers have continued to argue that gender is a major factor that enhance performance of the individual in the organization and as a result, certain type of work are specifically gender based. It has been proven that gender role in work performance cannot be overlooked. Knudson (1982) studied whether women trained in management were as assertive and as competent in their jobs as men with similar training. The results of the study revealed that women were as assertive as men and performed equally well on their jobs as their men counterparts. However, Joshi (1993) investigates the possible gender-related differences in the determinants of job performance. The parameters of performance included were absence, performance evaluations and commitment to the organisation. The results showed some similarities as well as

some critical differences in the determinants of job performance of the two sexes. A the study carried by Jimoh (2008) on situational judgment, emotional labour, conscientiousness and demographic factors as predictors of job performance among university administrative workers in southwestern Nigeria shows that there was no differences in work performance of male and female. In an empirical study by Azim, Haque and Chowdhury (2013) on levels of job satisfaction of employees in Bangladesh, job satisfaction level was found to differ among employees in terms of gender. In the same vein, Yutaka and Ohzono (2013) study revealed that male had higher levels of work values than female, except for monetary rewards. In Illinois State University, Stone, Foster, Webster, Harrison and Jawahar (2016) found gender having a minimal effects on job performance. Thus, there has been conflicting results in studies attempting to find gender relationship with workers' performance. From these research findings, it appears that given the opportunity and equal treatment and training, both sexes can perform any task effectively. In essence, qualitative workers are those who are highly motivated, conscientious, efficient, creative, knowledgeable, and adaptable, committed to societal and organizational goals and have the right attitudes. Implicit in these aforementioned qualities is also, the necessity for workers irrespective of their sex to receive learning opportunities and other in-service training activities towards optimal performance and overall organisational performance.

On the issue of marital status, Khurshid, Qasmi and Ashuraf (2012) observed that marital status affects the self-efficacy of teachers and that married male and female teachers have high self-efficacy which will lead to high job performance. Hassan and Ogunkoya (2014) found marital status to be mostly predictive of job performance of Insurance salesmen. In another study by Olatunji and Mokuolu (2014) job satisfaction was found to be influenced by marital status. In contrast, the study carried out by Lekha and Magesh (2016) showed that unmarried employees can perform more efficiently than married employees since their commitment towards their family and other circumstances are considerably less when compared to the married employees. Iwuagwu, Okogbo and Okonta (2016) in their study reported that marital status has significantly influence on job performance of secondary school teachers. Munene, Mulira and Kasekende (2008) asserted that worker performance is directly related to workers' competence and willingness to serve above and beyond the call of duty. Consequently, for workers therefore to perform optimally in their given tasks, there is need for them to be committed as well as possess the right attitudes to work.

The level of education attainment of an individual employee is also another major factor that may or may not enhance the effectiveness of an employee in the chosen work place. Educational attainment refers to the academic credentials or degrees an individual has obtained. Hunter (1986) posited that cognitive ability facilitates the learning of job-relevant knowledge and thereby indirectly promotes

stronger job performance as well. Kim and Mohtadi (1992) asserted that education has a direct effect on economic development, economic growth, individual ability (potential and work performance). Furthermore, Schmidt and Hunter (1998) found that cognitive ability was strongly related to job performance and was an important contributor to success on virtually every job. According to Sonnentag and Frese (2002) workers' performance is not stable over time. Variability in a workers' performance overtime reflects learning processes other long term changes. Dudley, Orvis, Lebiecki, and Cortina (2006) study showed that years of education were positively related to Conscientiousness, even when controlling for other socio-demographic variables. In a related study, Iranzo and Peri (2006) concluded that as the level of education increased up to secondary level; it had little effect (less than 2 per cent) on total factor productivity for every additional year of education. Thomas and Feldman (2009) meta-analysis showed that highly educated workers tend to displayed greater creativity and demonstrate more citizenship behaviours than less educated workers. They further stressed that highly educated workers appear to engage in fewer counterproductive work behaviours like workplace aggression, workplace substance use, and absenteeism. Hence, it could be succinctly says that education at any point is a screening device in selecting employees and also a human capital device that may induce greater performance.

Within the context of a job, experience entails the accumulation of job-specific knowledge from action, practice and perception of the tasks and duties associated with a specific job. Campbell (1990) stated that as work experience leads to the accumulation of relevant knowledge, skills and abilities, performance should improve. According to human capital theory by Smith (2000), employees make investments of experience in themselves, which enhance their ability and thus influence their performance. This suggests that workers' performance changes over time because individuals accumulate work experience. It therefore implies that as work experience lead to the accumulation of relevance knowledge, skills and abilities, performance is expected to be at improving level. Evidently, the study of Hassan and Davies (2010) indicated that more experienced rubber tappers performed better than less experienced rubber tappers. In another study, Ng and Feldman (2013) found a positive, moderate correlation between tenure and innovative behaviours, which consist of idea generation, dissemination and implementation. This relationship suggests that workers who stay in a role longer may become more capable of facilitating and implementing change. Shwartz (2015) submits that today's organisations must be managed by competitive people who have an amazing transformation. A study by Globalforce (2016) showed that experience workers inhabits beliefs that are internalised, values as well as unique job expectation to their occupation which result in effective socialization. As a consequence, such employees are in a better position to perform better than the inexperienced employees who have no previous experience or knowledge to

a work situation. Hence, the ability to create organisational wealth relies upon the ability of the organisation to acquire experienced employees who not only ensure efficiency in the processes but also ensure that they are effective in what they do. From the authors' perspective, experienced workers more concern about job commitment than the inexperienced workers. Thus, workers' work experience has a direct relationship with the quality of services they offer, worker's stability, seriousness in attitude to work reduced negative work behaviour like absenteeism and nature of judgments which might lead to the improved performance of individual and organisation.

From array of related literature reviewed regarding the relationship between demographic characteristics (age, gender, marital status, level of education attainment, working experience) and work performance, the researchers found that most of the prior studies looked at individual characteristics in a single study in private companies and manufacturing industries. Additionally, these single studies have been done in developed countries and have failed to look at all these demographic characteristics in a multiple organisations like public service. Most importantly, result from previous studies has described relationship between the study demographic characteristic and work performance as positive, negative and insignificant. Thus, the present study differs from the prior studies by focuses on demographic characteristics and workers' performance in public service in Nigeria.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study was the descriptive survey design of the *ex- post facto* type. The design was considered appropriate because the independent variable is in existence and cannot be manipulated by the researcher to cause a change in the dependent variable. The target population for the study was public servants whose appointment has been confirmed in the ministries, department and agencies (MDAs) in Cross River State, Nigeria. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 10 ministries, 10 departments and five agencies. Using the proportional stratified random sampling technique, the actual sample respondents of 1.068 was drawn for the study. Two validated instruments were used to collect data for the study. These are "Demographic characteristics questionnaire" and "worker performance scale". The instruments were designed on the 4-point Likert scale format. A pilot study was conducted on a sample of 20 participants and internal consistency coefficient of 0.83 and 0.86 was obtained using split-half reliability and test-retest methods and this made the questionnaire to overcome the cultural biasness. The researchers administered the instruments on the sampled respondents in the selected ministries; department and agencies. The data collected through the questionnaire for the study was collated and statistically analyzed using mean, standard deviation and inferential statistics of Analysis of Variance at 0.05 level of significance.

*Research Questions*

The following were the research questions answered by the study:

1. To what extent do age influence workers' performance in public service in Cross River State?
2. What is the extent to which gender differs in workers' performance in public service in Cross River State?
3. What extent does level of education attainments influence workers' performance in public service in Cross River State?

4. What extent does marital status influence workers' performance in public service in Cross River State?
5. To what extent do year of experience influence workers' performance in public service in Cross River State?

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section deals with the presentation of results relating to the association of the independent variable and the dependent variable of the study. The presentations are done on the basis of the research questions raised for the study. The results are presented sequentially with charts and table, interpretations and discussions below.

Variables	Freq.	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error of Mean
Valid							
20-25	11	1.0	1.0	1.0			
26-31	144	13.5	13.5	14.5			
32-37	326	30.5	30.5	45.5			
38-43	408	38.2	38.2	83.2			
44-49	177	16.6	16.6	99.8			
50+	2	2	2	100.0			
WRP Total	1068	100.0	100.0		<b>3.5637</b>	<b>.95967</b>	<b>.02937</b>
Variance =							
.921							
Sum =							
3806.00							

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Age and Workers' Performance

The result in Table 1 shows the descriptive indexes including frequency, mean and standard deviation of age and workers' performance. From the obtained result of Table 1, the aggregate score show a mean of 3.5637, and a standard deviation of .95967 implying that less than half of the respondents linked workers' performance to age. Hence, in public service, achievement of optimal performance does not depend on the workers' age. However, age of an employee in the public service is associated with the workers'

performance. In reaching this conclusion, it is important to realize that as workers advanced in age, their organs and mental abilities tend to wear out, less effective as they grow older. With occurrence illness or other diseases their ears tend to be weakened with passing of time thereby making it difficult for them to perform at higher level as when they started the work. Invariably, this assertion is in consonance with findings Jimoh (2008) and Ng and Feldman (2008) that age is associated with work performance.

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
WPR Equal Variance assumed	.784	.376	-2.231	1066	-.026	.88512	.39667	-1.66347	-.10677
Equal Variance Not assumed			-2.224	1016	.026	.88512	.39790	-1.66593	-.10431

Table 2. Summary of test analysis of gender and Workers' Performance

Looking at the results in Table 2, we can see the result of the equal variance between gender and workers' performance with a negative t-value of  $-2.231$   $p > 0.05$ . This simply implies that gender has a negative significant relationship with workers' performance. Following this result, both male and

female trained on the same job do perform alike. It therefore means that if male and female are given equal opportunities on any tasks performance in the public service there is bound to be a progressive improvement as both can deliver as same.

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	888.51	4	222.13	5.402	.000
Residual	43711.75	1063	41.12		
Total	44600.26	1067			

Table 3: Analysis of Variance of Education Attainment and Workers' Performance

The result of Analysis of Variance in Table 3 indicates the obtained F value (5.402) and reported significance level, it can be concluded that education attainment and workers' performance are significantly related. By implications, different levels of planned and systematic training acquired by

workers contribute a lot to their performance in the work place. Thus, knowledge has become the major component of human individual, social and corporate tool for productivity and wealth creation.

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	515.37	2	257.69	6.23	.002
Residual	44084.89	1065	41.39		
Total	44600.26	1067			

Table 4: Analysis of Variance of Marital Status and Workers' Performance

To test the significance influence of marital status and workers' performance, analysis of variance result in Table 4 show the calculated F value (6.225,  $p < 0.05$ ). The result

indicates that marital status significantly influences workers' performance in public service.

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	537.48	4	134.37	3.242	.012
Residual	44062.78	1063	41.45		
Total	44600.26	1067			

Table 5: Analysis of Variance of Years of Experience and Workers' Performance

The result of analysis of variance in Table 5 shows obtained calculated F (3.242,  $p < 0.05$ ). The result simply means that years of experience and workers' performance are at variance and show significance level. This is to say, public service with blended experienced and young professionals who have gathered wealth of skills over the years do perform better on their job. Hence, the more workers stay on a particular job the greater his/her job proficiency.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The present study was aimed at determining the influence of demographic characteristics on workers' performance in

public service. Obtained results of the study showed that while education attainment and years of work experience significantly influenced workers' performance, the potency of other demographic characteristics should not be undermined. However, within the scope of this study, the findings have implications for employers of labour and human resource administrators who should give adequate consideration to personal profiles during recruitment and selection for employment. For already employed staff frequent reviewer and update of knowledge and skills. One of the limitations of this study was its population bounded to one city and concentration on public sector. Therefore, it is suggested that studies to be done in broader population and private sectors.

Also, according to the positive relationship between demographic characteristics and workers' performance, it is necessary to consider the priority of job cadres, family type, religion and ethnicity and also researches should be done to study the personality traits and its influence on optimal workers' performance level.

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