SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DETERMINANTS OF WORKPLACE PERFORMANCE AND OCCUPATIONAL EXPERIENCE AMONG BUILDING TECHNOLOGY GRADUATES IN SOUTH EAST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The research investigated socio-demographic determinants of workplace performance and occupational experience among building technology graduates in the Southeastern Region of Nigeria. Three research questions were answered, and a significance level of 0.05 was used to test three hypotheses. A correlational research design was employed, including 155 building technology graduates from five universities. The questionnaire, titled Socio-Demographic Variables Influence on Workplace Performance and Occupational Experience (SVIWPOEQ), was face-validated by three professionals and demonstrated high internal consistency with a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of 0.87. Data analysis was conducted using regression analysis to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. The findings revealed that socio-demographic variables have a negative correlation with occupational experience and a positive correlation with workplace performance. Specifically, age negatively correlated with occupational experience (r = -0.284, p = 0.007) but positively correlated with workplace performance (r = 0.321, p = 0.002), while education level positively correlated with both occupational experience (r = 0.402, $p < 0.001$) and workplace performance (r = 0.475, $p <$ 0.001). The study concluded that socio-demographic variables significantly impact workplace performance and occupational experience. Recommendations include fostering an inclusive work environment and promoting diversity initiatives for building technology graduates.

Keywords: workplace performance, occupational experience, Socio-demographic determinants, building technology graduates, influence

Introduction

Today, the building technology industry leverages emerging technologies, management science, and related science operations to achieve optimal performance (Chukwu, Ojo & Osinem, 2017) Over the years, structural requirements, safety and health are at the heart of the building technology industry (Yiu et al., 2019). Ayarkwa et al. (2011) opined that occupational experience could be a key factor in shaping workplace performance and career development of graduates in the building technology sector. Building technology in the modern sense refers to the use of a broad variety of technical abilities together with the capacity to manage people, equipment and materials to carry out duties successfully and efficiently (Chukwu, Ojo & Osinem, 2017). Architectural design, surveying, structural design, engineering geology, building science and materials, building maintenance, technical drawing, tendering, site management, building science and materials, financial control and building laws are just a few of the topics covered in building technology course (Oviawa, Ezeji, & Uwameiye, 2015). FRN

(2013) posited that building technology broadens a person's intellectual horizons and gives them the abilities necessary for technological advancement and occupational experience.

Occupational experience is the body of information gained by work in a particular field in terms of knowledge, abilities, and comprehension (Cohen et al., 2023; Berg et al., 2017). Graduates in building technology need to get real-world experience in order to apply their academic knowledge to real-world building projects. Occupational experience raises skill levels and enhances decision-making and problem-solving abilities (Odacı et al., 2022). Numerous studies have demonstrated that workplace performance and occupational experience are positively correlated. Graduates will be more productive in the workplace because they will have a greater awareness of industry procedures, project management methods, and manufacturing processes via relevant job experience (Azodo, 2018; Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Additionally, Professionals are better able to handle issues, adjust to changing work situations, and generate high-quality work (Zhou & Lin, 2016). Numerous studies have explored the correlation between occupational experience and socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, and level of education. Davidescu et al. (2020) study revealed older graduates often have more work experience, which improves workplace performance and allows for career development. Additionally, there appears to be a gender disparity in occupational experience Compared to women, men have a longer employment history (Son Hing et al., 2023). Therefore, to create interventions that support graduates' careers and encourage long-term success in the building technology sector, it is important to comprehend the link between occupational experience and socio-demographic characteristics. Obviously, exploring the interaction between occupational experience and workplace performance is utmost in fostering academic advancement to both individual and organizational success.

The concept of workplace performance is an essential component to achieve strategic objectives and maintain a competitive edge in every industry. Pradhan & Jena (2016) defined workplace performance as an individual's ability to consistently meet goals, fulfill work-related responsibilities, and satisfy needs. This includes the caliber, quantity, and timing of tasks and obligations. Assbeihat (2016) posited that workplace performance is an individual's ability to collaborate across groups and divisions and their skill at problem-solving and adaptability. Workplace performance highlights a blend of interpersonal skills, specific knowledge, and the ability to grow in response to a changing work environment (Zhenjing et al., 2022). Given that workplace performance are dependent on worker’s fulfillment (Pandey & Chauhan, 2021). organizational success (Bunteng, 2022), trade growth (Zahonogo, 2017), and many other important perspectives to achieve and maintain workplace objectives. It is essential to consider the many factors such as demographic factors that can go into graduates' job outcomes as all fields develop. In several situations that clearly affect graduate students' performance in their professional careers, socio-demographic variables have emerged as a fundamental but little-studied aspect (Malik & Hussain, 2020). Therefore, understanding socio-demographic variables influence on workplace performance elucidates how personal experiences influence career outcomes and informs inclusive and productive organizational practices.

Socio-demographic determinants are characteristics or attributes that help classify and represent individuals or populations in various contexts. Individual or societal traits that are measurable or classifiable are known as socio-demographic variables and they are fundamental tools used in research, summaries, and information analysis to identify and categorize diverse groups of people (Bhattacherjee, 2012). These attributes include, but are not limited to, age, gender, educational attainment, income, profession, marital status, race or ethnicity, religion, place of residence, and size of family (Kulachai et al., 2023). The importance of socio-demographic determinants extends far beyond representation; they are essential to comprehending the intricacies of our reality. Socio-demographic determinants are important in

a variety of contexts, such as workplace (Kadiri & Iyayi, 2019). Marinaccio et al., 2013) and showcasing investigations (Petutschnig, et al., 2021). Analysts can uncover patterns, discrepancies, and opportunities using statistical data, guiding partners and decision-makers toward better informed and objective decisions. For example, gender socio-demographic highlights disparities in employment, income, and access to resources, promoting behaviors that support sexual orientation (Bieri, 2009). Age socio-demographic reveals generational trends and habits that impact labor flow and promotion strategies (Slootweg & Rowson, 2018).

Previous studies have emphasized the impact of socio-demographic determinants on workplace performance and occupational experience among graduates. Studies carried out by Stoffberg et al. (2023) and Oswald-Egg & Renold (2021) have discovered that more experienced graduates with higher degrees of education often exhibit better levels of workplace performance, which is attributed to their accumulated occupational experience and competence. These provide insights into the various impacts of socio-demographic determinants on the operation of the work environment, enabling interventions aimed at advancing careers. A few studies have studied the correlation between socio-demographic determinants and occupational experience among graduates. Studies by Léné (2011) and Abun et al. (2021) suggests that occupational experience is strongly correlated with age and educational attainment, with more experienced and educated graduates typically having accumulated greater work experience. However, only a few research has examined the influence of gender and other socio-cultural factors on workplace performance among building technology graduates, which limits their study's findings. One of the main areas of investigation has been the connection between building technology graduates' occupational experience and workplace performance. Zhenjing et al. (2022) and Kosec et al. (2022) have conducted studies that show a favourable correlation between occupational experience and work performance such as job efficiency and work quality. These factors provide observational evidence in favour of the theory that, among building technology graduates, occupational experience may enhance the implementation of an improved work environment. Younger workers are less adept at identifying and averting complicated threats, but they are more inclined to adapt to unutilized security conventions and advancements (Braňka, 2016).

Equally, more experienced workers are involved to some extent but are less likely to inquire about or change from underutilized security measures (Griffin & Curcuruto, 2016). The differences in security skills between gender are too obvious. Research suggests that women are more prone to follow safe habits, whereas males are more likely to lock in on risky ones (Logan & Walker, 2021). Previous research has shown the intricate relationships between socio-demographic determinants, the functioning of the work performance, and the occupational experience of graduates in creating innovation. While current studies provide valuable insights, more complex and richly relevant analyses which are needed to identify the underlying elements and intermediaries that shape these correlations. Given that these studies have demonstrated that gender differences and work experiences are evident in workplace performance there are minimal studies focusing on workplace performance and occupational experience in relation to socio-demographic variables. Therefore, examination of various dimension of socio-demographic determinants is warranted in knowing if they matter among building technology graduates.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the study's relevance, the research on the specific impact of socio-demographic determinants on graduates' occupational experience and workplace performance is notably lacking. While research on the impact of workplace performance and occupational experience is available, studies that investigate deeply into the interaction with

socio-demographic determinants are still limited. In Nigeria, the building technology sector serves as a cornerstone for economic growth and offers a plethora of opportunities for skilled professionals who complete educational programs around the region (Adindu et al., 2020). Understanding the impact of socio-demographic determinants on work performance and occupational experience becomes increasingly important as building technology sector grows to meet the demands of a dynamic global market. This study acts as a benchmark, guiding efforts to provide graduates, academic institutions, and industry partners with knowledge that may promote constructive change, foster skilled development, and advance the building technology sector toward a more prosperous and optimistic future. This study aims to close this gap by carefully examining the socio-demographic factors that influences workplace performance and occupational experience.

Purpose of the Study

This study's primary objective was to investigate the socio-demographic determinants influence on workplace performance and occupational experience of building technology graduates in Southeastern, Nigeria. Specifically, the study determined:

- the relationship between socio-demographic determinants and building technology graduates' workplace performance in Southeastern, Nigeria
- the relationship between socio-demographic determinants and building technology graduates' occupational experience in Southeastern, Nigeria.
- what correlation exists among socio-demographic determinants, building technology graduates' occupational experience and workplace performance in Southeastern, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. How do socio-demographic determinants relate with building technology graduates' workplace performance in Southeastern, Nigeria?
2. How do socio-demographic determinants relate with building technology graduates' occupational experience in Southeastern, Nigeria?
3. What correlation exists among socio-demographic determinants, building technology graduates' occupational experience and workplace performance in Southeastern, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses formulated to guide the study were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H_{O1}: There is no significant relationship between the workplace performance and occupational experience of building technology graduates in Southeastern, Nigeria.

H_{O2}: There is no significant relationship between the socio-demographic determinants and workplace performance of building technology graduates in Southeastern, Nigeria.

H_{O3}: There is no significant correlation among socio-demographic determinants, building technology graduates' occupational experience and workplace performance in Southeastern, Nigeria.

Method

A correlational research design was adopted. Correlational research is a quantitative inquiry technique used to find out the relationship between two or more elements without assuming causality (Cohen et al., 2013). Correlational research design was considered appropriate for the study to ascertain the strength, direction, and type of correlation between variables by employing factual techniques like correlation coefficients, because the correlation plan enables the researcher to independently identify components and examine potential relationships between them. The study was conducted in Nigeria's Southeastern Region This region was considered since a sizable number of universities in the region offered courses in building technology. The study's population is made up of 155 building technology graduates from five government owned universities in South Eastern Nigeria made up of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUAU), Enugu State University of Technology (ESUT), Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Akwa (UNIZIK), Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki (EBSU) and University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), The participants information were obtained from the record of graduate students' social media groups in the five Universities. For items on workplace performance of building technology graduates, the reliability coefficient obtained was 0.82, while the overall reliability coefficient was 0.87. With the help of two research partners, the researchers were able to handle the questionnaire duplicates. The research assistants were hired, given a briefing on the study's objectives, and directed to distribute and retrieve survey copies from the participants. The researcher and their research assistants ensured appropriate arrangement, safe handling, prompt orderlies to the respondents, and a greater response rate. Although it was only supposed to take one week, the instrument's dispersion and recovery actually took three weeks. 125 duplicates of the 155 survey copies that were managed were returned, yielding an 80.65% return rate. The following statistical techniques were applied: Pearson Product Moment Correlation and multiple regression analysis. While Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to analyze data in answering the research questions, multiple regression analysis was carried out using SPSS v. 25 to test all the hypotheses defined for the study.

SN	Range of values of correlation coefficient (r)	Remarks
1	± 0.80 to 1.00	Strong correlation
2	± 0.60 to 0.79	High correlation
3	± 0.40 to 0.59	Moderate correlation
4	± 0.20 to 0.39	Weak correlation
5	± 0.00 to 0.19	Insignificant correlation

Results

Table 1: Correlation between Socio-demographic Determinants and Workplace Performance

Socio-demographic Determinants	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Age	0.321	0.002
Gender	-0.156	0.078
Education Level	0.475	<0.001

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

Table 1 shows that age has a moderate positive correlation (r = 0.321, p = 0.002) with workplace performance, while gender shows a weak negative correlation (r = -0.156, p = 0.078) with workplace performance, but the relationship is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Also, education level demonstrates a high positive correlation (r = 0.475, p < 0.001) with workplace performance, indicating that higher levels of education are associated with better workplace performance among building technology graduates in Southeastern Nigeria.

Table 2: Correlation between Socio-demographic Determinants and Occupational Experience

Socio-demographic Determinants	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Age	-0.284	0.007
Gender	0.091	0.274
Education Level	0.402	<0.001

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

Table 2 shows that age has a moderate negative correlation (r = -0.284, p = 0.007) with occupational experience, while gender shows a weak positive correlation (r = 0.091, p = 0.274) with occupational experience, but the relationship is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Also, education level demonstrates a moderate positive correlation (r = 0.402, p < 0.001) with occupational experience, indicating that higher levels of education are associated with greater occupational experience among building technology graduates in Southeastern Nigeria.

Table 3: Correlation among Socio-demographic Determinants, Occupational Experience, and Workplace Performance

Socio-demographic Determinants	Occupational Experience	Workplace Performance
Age	-0.284	0.321
Gender	0.091	-0.156
Education Level	0.402	0.475

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

Table 3 shows that age has a negative correlation with occupational experience and a positive correlation with workplace performance, gender shows a weak positive correlation with occupational experience and a weak negative correlation with workplace performance, while education level demonstrates positive correlations with both occupational experience and workplace performance.

Hypotheses

Table 4: Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypotheses	Statement	Test Statistic	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Ho_1	There is no significant relationship between the workplace performance and occupational experience of building	Pearson Correlation (r)	0.582**	< 0.001	Reject Ho_1

	technology graduates in Southeastern, Nigeria.				
Ho_2	There is no significant relationship between the socio-demographic determinants and workplace performance of building technology graduates in Southeastern, Nigeria.	Multiple Regression	F = 15.346	< 0.001	Reject Ho_2
Ho_3	There is no significant correlation among socio-demographic determinants, building technology graduates' occupational experience, and workplace performance in Southeastern, Nigeria.	Multiple Regression	F = 21.479	< 0.001	Reject Ho_3

In Table 4, Ho_1 indicates a significant positive correlation (r = 0.582). This implies that better workplace performance is associated with greater occupational experience among building technology graduates. Ho_2 shows that the socio-demographic determinants (age, gender, education level) significantly predict workplace performance, indicating that these variables collectively influence how well graduates perform in their workplaces. Ho_3 shows that there is a significant correlation among the socio-demographic determinants, occupational experience, and workplace performance. This suggests that these factors are interrelated and collectively impact the graduates' professional outcomes.

Discussion of Findings

The results of the study indicate that workplace performance and socio-demographic determinants of building technology graduates in Southeastern Nigeria are moderately correlated. This result is in line with the research conducted by Omori & Bassey (2019), who examined the demographic characteristics and workers' performance in public service in Nigeria. Their research showed that workers' performance is influenced by demographic characteristics. The results of this study were similarly consistent with those of Rahman et al. (2020), who discovered that employees' performance was influenced by demographic variables. This study's findings are supported by Amegayibor (2021), who found a considerable positive correlation between graduates' workplace performance and socio-demographic factors (age, gender, mother's education, location, and parents' income). According to Hapompwe (2020), male peers' work performance is more affected by an increase or decrease in age than female peers. Pahos et al. (2021) discovered that the age of the workers significantly affected their work performance.

Additionally, a weak negative correlation was found between the socio-demographic determinants and the occupational experience of building technology graduates. This finding is consistent with the findings of John et al. (2020), who found that graduates' occupational experiences are influenced by socio-demographic factors. Numerous studies have shown that a person's or graduates' aptitude for work experience is significantly influenced by their demographics. From the study's findings, we may infer that there is a mild negative correlation between socio-demographic determinants and occupational experience, whereas there is a moderate positive correlation between them and workplace perfromance. Nishant et al. (2014) found a moderately positive relationship between occupational experience and workplace performance; therefore, it appears that there is no discernible impact of either on graduates' workplace performance. However, the value (-0.202) indicates that there is only a weak correlation between the two variables. The study's findings corroborate those of Zaman et al. (2021), who discovered a high correlation between graduates' views on being self-employed and their workplace performance. Stated differently, there is a connection between graduates' aspirations to launch their own companies and their workplace performance. The study's findings supported Msuya's (2020) assertion that there is a connection between graduates' aspirations to be self-employed and their work performance.

The analysis of the hypothesis revealed a substantial correlation between workplace performance and occupational experience, as well as between specific socio-demographic parameters and the workplace performance of building technology graduates.

Conclusion

The research investigated the socio-demographic determinants of workplace performance and occupational experience among building technology graduates in Southeastern Nigeria. The findings reveal that socio-demographic determinants, particularly age and education level, significantly influence workplace performance and occupational experience. Age demonstrated a weak positive correlation with workplace performance and a weak negative correlation with occupational experience, suggesting that older graduates tend to perform slightly better at work but may have less occupational experience. Education level showed a moderate positive correlation with both workplace performance and occupational experience, indicating that higher educational attainment is associated with better performance and greater experience in the workplace. Gender did not exhibit significant correlations with either workplace performance or occupational experience, highlighting that gender may not be a key factor in these contexts. The high correlation between workplace performance and occupational experience highlights the importance of practical experience in enhancing

workplace performance among graduates. Consequently, it is expected of building technology graduates at the Southeastern Nigerian universities to perform better in the workplace and to gain the necessary knowledge and occupational experience to begin paid or independent work upon graduation. This study was then conducted to produce data supporting the acclaimed scenario among graduates of building technology for motivation to accomplish and take into account their familial origins.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were offered in view of the study's findings:

- The government and employers should Invest in higher education and continuous professional development for building technology graduates to improve workplace performance and occupational experience.
- Employers should design strategies to leverage the strengths of both younger and older employees, optimizing their contributions.
- The government and employers should offer career counseling and mentorship programs to help graduates navigate their careers effectively and leverage their socio-demographic strengths.
- Schools should collaborate with industries to offer apprenticeships and internships. They can also invite industry leaders to give guest lectures and impart their real-world expertise.
- Gender diversity should be promoted by employers.

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