

Workforce Diversity and Equity in Career Advancement as Determinants of Service Delivery Effectiveness in the Public Service

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Abstract: *This study examined the effects of workforce diversity and equity in career advancement on service delivery effectiveness in Ministry of Interior, Nigeria. A descriptive quantitative survey design was adopted, with the target population comprising 8,450 employees of Ministry of Interior, Nigeria across headquarters in Abuja and state commands in the North-Central geopolitical zone. Applying Yamane's formula, a minimum sample of 382 was determined and stratified random sampling was employed proportionally across grade levels and locations, with 370 valid respondents providing usable data for analysis. Structured online questionnaires validated through expert review and pilot testing achieved Cronbach's alpha values of .814 for workforce diversity and .841 for equity in career advancement, both exceeding the .70 reliability threshold. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression techniques via IBM SPSS version 27.0. Results revealed that workforce diversity ($\beta = .166$, $t = 3.373$, $p = .001$) and equity in career advancement ($\beta = .272$, $t = 5.277$, $p < .001$) each significantly and positively predicted service delivery effectiveness. The combined two-predictor model explained 34.2% of variance in service delivery effectiveness ($R^2 = .342$, $F = 95.68$, $p < .001$). Equity in career advancement emerged as the stronger predictor, a finding particularly consequential given that equity simultaneously recorded the lowest perceived level among all study variables ($M = 2.987$). The study concludes that demographic heterogeneity and career fairness constitute complementary but distinct performance drivers in Nigeria's federal security institutions and advances recommendations targeting both diversity management and promotion system reform.*

Keywords: workforce diversity, equity in career advancement, service delivery effectiveness, ministry of interior Nigeria, resource-based view theory, federal character principle, public sector performance

INTRODUCTION

The imperative for effective public service delivery in Nigeria has never been more pressing, with a population exceeding 220 million citizens placing enormous demands on federal institutions whose performance record has been widely criticised as inadequate, inefficient, and unresponsive to citizen

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK needs (Okatta, Ajayi, & Olawale, 2024; Onuorah, 2024). Ministry of Interior, Nigeria, as a security-oriented federal institution responsible for immigration services, civil defence coordination, correctional administration, and internal security management, operates at the intersection of these performance imperatives, where service delivery failures carry consequences extending from citizen frustration to national security compromise (Etalong, Chikeleze, Kaze, & Krivins, 2025; Adubasim & Ufomba, 2024). Average passport processing times of six to eight weeks against a target of two weeks, citizen satisfaction ratings of only 52%, and achievement of merely 63% of annual operational targets collectively illustrate the scale of the ministry's performance deficit and the urgency of identifying evidence-based pathways to improvement (Ogunade, Bankole, & Kolawole, 2024; Eberechi & Achara, 2024).

Against this performance context, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices have attracted growing scholarly and policy attention as mechanisms through which organisations can unlock human capital advantages that translate into superior operational outcomes (Chukwudi & Eusebius, 2023; Adeyemi Abdulwasiiu, 2024). Two dimensions of DEI are particularly theoretically salient for the Ministry of Interior's performance challenges: workforce diversity, reflecting the demographic heterogeneity of employees across gender, ethnicity, age, educational background, and the geopolitical zones mandated for representation by Nigeria's Federal Character Principle; and equity in career advancement, capturing the perceived fairness and merit-basis of promotion processes, leadership appointments, and career progression opportunities accessible to all employees regardless of demographic background (Nwakanma, 2024; Udoyiu & Uko, 2023). These two dimensions are conceptually distinct yet practically interrelated: workforce diversity determines the range of perspectives, knowledge, and capabilities available to the organisation, while equity in career advancement determines whether diverse talent is retained, motivated, and progressively deployed in roles where it can maximally contribute to service delivery effectiveness (Etalong et al., 2025; Olu-Ogunleye & Akanji, 2025).

Despite the theoretical plausibility of these relationships, empirical investigation of how workforce diversity and career advancement equity specifically influence service delivery effectiveness in Nigerian federal security ministries remains largely absent from the literature. Existing research has predominantly examined private sector organisations, focused on general performance metrics not specific to public service delivery, or examined DEI broadly without disaggregating dimensions that may carry differential performance implications (Okatta et al., 2024; Odazie, Takyi, Nwachukwu, Oyewole, & Ajayi, 2024). This study responds to these gaps by conducting a rigorous quantitative examination of workforce diversity and equity in career advancement as independent predictors of service delivery effectiveness in Ministry of Interior, Nigeria, contributing original empirical evidence to an underresearched domain while providing actionable insights for human resource practitioners, ministry leadership, and national policymakers.

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The specific objectives are to: (i) assess the effect of workforce diversity on service delivery effectiveness in Ministry of Interior, Nigeria; and (ii) examine how equity in career advancement influences service delivery effectiveness in Ministry of Interior, Nigeria. The corresponding null hypotheses tested at $\alpha = .05$ are: H_{01} : Workforce diversity has no significant effect on service delivery effectiveness in Ministry of Interior, Nigeria; H_{02} : Equity in career advancement has no significant influence on service delivery effectiveness in Ministry of Interior, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

Workforce Diversity

Workforce diversity refers to the heterogeneous composition of employees within an organisation, encompassing variations in demographic characteristics, including gender, ethnicity, age, religion, educational background, and geographical origin. Each of these factors brings distinct knowledge, perspectives, communication styles, and problem-solving approaches to the organisational knowledge pool (Nwakanma, 2024; Udoyiu & Uko, 2023; Chukwudi & Eusebius, 2023). In the Nigerian context, workforce diversity has a distinctive constitutional dimension through the Federal Character Principle, which mandates equitable representation of Nigeria's six geopolitical zones in federal employment. It recognises that demographic representation in governmental institutions is not merely an equity concern but a governance legitimacy imperative in a multi-ethnic nation, where perceived zonal exclusion from federal institutions generates political instability and undermines institutional trust (Onuorah, 2024; Adubasim & Ufomba, 2024). The business case for diversity argues that heterogeneous teams outperform homogeneous ones in complex problem-solving, decision-making quality, and innovation outputs when diversity is properly managed. Critics caution, however, that poorly managed diversity can generate communication challenges, interpersonal conflicts, and reduced cohesion that undermine rather than enhance performance (Okatta et al., 2024; Etalong et al., 2025).

Surface-level diversity, encompassing immediately observable characteristics such as gender and ethnicity, and deep-level diversity, reflecting underlying differences in values, cognitive styles, and experiential backgrounds, each contribute distinct performance benefits through different mechanisms (Odazie et al., 2024; Ogunade et al., 2024). Surface-level diversity enhances organisational legitimacy, stakeholder trust, and market responsiveness by signalling inclusiveness and reflecting the demographics of the populations served, while deep-level diversity enriches problem-solving and decision-making by introducing cognitive heterogeneity that prevents groupthink and expands the range of solutions generated and evaluated (Eberechi & Achara, 2024; Abu, Nkpurukwe, & Joda, 2024). In the Ministry of Interior's context, both forms of diversity carry operational significance: surface-level zonal and ethnic representation enhances the ministry's perceived legitimacy across Nigeria's regions, improving citizen cooperation with immigration and security operations, while deep-

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level diversity generated by employees from varied regional and cultural backgrounds enriches the ministry's collective knowledge of local security dynamics, cultural norms, and implementation contexts across Nigeria's geographically and culturally diverse states (Olu-Ogunleye & Akanji, 2025; Musa & Ijuo, 2024).

Diversity management encompasses the policies, practices, and cultural initiatives designed to attract, retain, develop, and leverage employees from diverse backgrounds, transforming demographic heterogeneity from a passive organisational characteristic into an actively managed strategic resource (Shettigar, 2024; Itunu & Egbedade, 2023). Effective diversity management requires leadership commitment, transparent recruitment processes, accountability mechanisms monitoring representation patterns, and cultural interventions addressing unconscious bias and creating psychological safety for diverse employees to contribute authentically (Anukwe, Eze, Onyeke, & Iloka, 2024; Uhuru & Ehule, 2024). For Ministry of Interior, Nigeria, diversity management must additionally navigate the tension between Federal Character compliance, which prioritises geographical representation, and merit-based selection, which prioritises capability, requiring sophisticated approaches that achieve both representativeness and competence without sacrificing either constitutional obligation or operational effectiveness (Onuorah, 2024; Nwakanma, 2024).

Equity in Career Advancement

Equity in career advancement refers to the fairness and impartiality of organisational processes governing employee promotions, appointments to leadership positions, and career progression opportunities, ensuring that advancement is determined by merit, performance, and relevant qualifications rather than demographic characteristics, personal connections, ethnic affiliations, or political patronage (Onuorah, 2024; Adubasim & Ufomba, 2024; Etalong et al., 2025). Scholars distinguish three equity dimensions particularly relevant to career advancement: distributive equity, concerning whether advancement outcomes are allocated fairly across demographic groups; procedural equity, addressing whether the processes used to make promotion decisions are transparent, consistent, and bias-resistant; and interactional equity, reflecting whether employees receive respectful, informative communication throughout advancement processes regardless of their ultimate outcomes (Ogunade et al., 2024; Eberechi & Achara, 2024). In Nigerian public sector organisations, career advancement is additionally complicated by political interference favouring certain ethnic or regional groups, patron-client relationships overriding merit-based assessment, bureaucratic rigidity privileging seniority over performance, and glass ceiling effects limiting women's access to senior positions despite equivalent qualifications and experience (Abu et al., 2024; Olu-Ogunleye & Akanji, 2025).

The performance implications of equity in career advancement extend across multiple organisational mechanisms. When employees perceive advancement systems as fair and merit-based, they maintain

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higher work effort, stronger organisational commitment, and greater willingness to engage in discretionary service behaviours that enhance performance beyond minimum role requirements, reasoning that their contributions will be recognised and rewarded proportionally (Musa & Ijuo, 2024; Shettigar, 2024). Conversely, perceived inequity in advancement triggers the corrective responses predicted by Adams' Equity Theory, including effort reduction to match perceived under-reward, psychological withdrawal from organisational commitment, and ultimately voluntary turnover among high-performing employees who seek fairer treatment elsewhere, all of which directly undermine service delivery capacity and quality (Itunu & Egbetade, 2023; Anukwe et al., 2024). The ministry's descriptive finding that equity in career advancement recorded the lowest mean among all study variables ($M = 2.987$, below the scale midpoint) signals an organisational justice deficit with direct performance implications that warrant urgent targeted intervention.

Service Delivery Effectiveness

Service delivery effectiveness in public sector organisations concerns the quality, efficiency, timeliness, and impact of services provided to citizens, encompassing accessibility, responsiveness, reliability, competence, and courtesy, which collectively determine whether citizens receive the services they need in ways that satisfy their expectations and fulfil the organisation's constitutional mandate (Agu & Obiora, 2022; Egundetugo, 2024). In the Ministry of Interior's operational context, service delivery effectiveness is reflected in concrete indicators such as passport processing turnaround times, immigration service efficiency, internal security response times, citizen satisfaction ratings, and the achievement of annual operational targets, each capturing a distinct dimension of the ministry's capacity to convert its human and material resources into valued public outcomes (Yusuf, 2021; Ogbachie & Jones, 2025). Public sector performance measurement faces unique challenges compared with private sector contexts, including mission ambiguity, multiple and sometimes conflicting objectives, and difficulty attributing outcomes to specific organisational actions when service delivery depends on citizen cooperation, political support, and interagency coordination (Shettigar, 2024; Ogunade et al., 2024).

Theoretical Framework

This study is primarily anchored in Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory, which provides the conceptual architecture for understanding how workforce diversity and career advancement equity, as organisational resources and capabilities respectively, generate the human capital configurations that enhance service delivery effectiveness. RBV theory, developed through the contributions of Barney (1991), Wernerfelt (1984), and subsequent scholars, posits that sustainable competitive advantage, or in public sector terms, sustained superior performance, stems from organisational resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (Crowell & Bellody, 2026; Falcon & Carillo, 2026). Workforce diversity satisfies these VRIN criteria in Ministry of Interior, Nigeria context: it is valuable

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because it expands the organisation's knowledge base and enhances responsiveness to Nigeria's heterogeneous citizenry; rare because achieving genuine demographic balance across ethnicity, gender, geography, and age requires sustained institutional commitment beyond routine compliance; inimitable because diversity built through long-term inclusive culture development, reputation among diverse talent pools, and community relationships cannot be quickly replicated; and non-substitutable because no alternative resource can replicate the contextual knowledge, cultural competencies, and stakeholder legitimacy that genuine workforce diversity provides (Samuel, Etim, Nweke-Maraizu, & Shinggu, 2025; Undie, Etim, & Samuel, 2025).

However, RBV recognises that resource possession alone does not guarantee performance benefits, requiring complementary organisational capabilities that configure resources for maximum impact (Appoh, Gobile, Alabi, & Oboyi, 2024; Ugwu, 2025). Equity in career advancement functions precisely as this enabling capability, ensuring that diverse talent is retained through fair treatment, progressively deployed into positions where it can contribute maximally, and motivated through procedural justice perceptions to invest discretionary effort in service delivery beyond minimum requirements. Without equity in career advancement, diverse employees who perceive unfair advancement barriers will reduce engagement, withhold discretionary effort, or exit the organisation, preventing the ministry from realising the performance benefits its diverse human capital could otherwise generate. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) complements RBV by explaining how equity-oriented advancement systems reduce intergroup divisions that would otherwise prevent diverse employees from collaborating productively, creating superordinate organisational identities transcending demographic subgroup boundaries (Adeyemi Abdulwasiiu, 2024; Udoyiu & Uko, 2023). Equity Theory (Adams, 1965) further grounds the framework by explaining the motivational mechanisms through which perceived career advancement fairness sustains the effort, commitment, and service quality behaviours that constitute service delivery effectiveness.

Empirical Review

The empirical literature on workforce diversity and organisational performance provides substantial though context-dependent evidence supporting positive relationships, with effect magnitudes varying across institutional contexts, management quality, and enabling conditions. Etalong et al. (2025) conducted a comparative survey of 400 employees across three African countries including Nigeria and found that workforce diversity significantly and positively influenced job performance ($\beta = .42$, $p < .01$), with effects substantially stronger in organisationally inclusive climates, establishing the context-conditional nature of diversity's performance contribution and directly corroborating the present study's theoretical argument that diversity requires enabling practices to generate performance benefits.

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Okatta et al. (2024), in their meta-analysis synthesising 52 studies including 12 African studies, found overall positive but moderate relationships between diversity initiatives and performance outcomes ($d = .43$), concluding that inclusive practices moderate diversity-performance relationships and that demographic representation alone is insufficient for performance improvement without accompanying management practices that leverage heterogeneous perspectives. Adubasim and Ufomba (2024) specifically examined workplace diversity management in Nigerian public sector MDAs in Bauchi State and found significant positive effects of diversity management on service performance ($R^2 = .58$), directly paralleling the present study's public sector Nigerian focus and providing evidence that diversity management's performance benefits operate within Nigerian bureaucratic institutional contexts sharing structural characteristics with the Ministry of Interior.

Itunu and Egbetade (2023) investigated workforce diversity effects on organisational performance in selected Nigerian private universities and found significant positive relationships ($\beta = .57, p < .01$), with gender and educational diversity demonstrating particularly strong performance associations, establishing that diversity's performance benefits extend across Nigerian sectoral contexts including both public and private service-oriented organisations. Onuorah (2024), examining diversity management in four Nigerian federal ministries through qualitative case study methods, found that while Federal Character provisions ensure some geographical representation, informal barriers substantially limit women's and minorities' genuine inclusion and advancement, a finding that contextualises the present study's descriptive evidence of below-average equity perceptions and the resulting performance implications when diverse employees are structurally prevented from contributing their full capabilities. Nwakanma (2024) demonstrated that Nigerian organisations achieve better DEI outcomes through contextually adapted approaches that account for Nigeria's unique ethnic dynamics rather than importing Western diversity management templates, reinforcing the present study's emphasis on examining DEI-performance relationships within Nigeria's specific institutional and cultural context rather than assuming universal applicability of findings from other national contexts.

Regarding equity in career advancement, Musa and Ijuo (2024) investigated workforce diversity and performance in Nigerian deposit money banks and found that gender and educational equity significantly predicted return on investment ($R^2 = .63$), establishing equity-oriented workforce practices as significant performance drivers in Nigerian financial institutions, with mechanisms including enhanced motivation and reduced talent attrition consistent with Equity Theory's predictions. Olu-Ogunleye and Akanji (2025) conducted a longitudinal study tracking 200 Nigerian bank employees over three years and found that diversity's positive performance effects strengthened considerably over time (year 1: $\beta = .18$, ns; year 3: $\beta = .51, p < .01$), suggesting that equity-sustaining practices that retain diverse talent generate compounding performance returns as equitably treated employees accumulate institutional knowledge and deepen organisational commitment.

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Ogunade et al. (2024) found in FrieslandCampina WAMCO Nigeria that inclusion, encompassing equity-oriented practices, demonstrated stronger performance correlations ($r = .68$) than diversity composition alone ($r = .61$), directly supporting the present study's finding that equity mechanisms generate stronger performance effects than demographic heterogeneity in isolation. Eberechi and Achara (2024) established that inclusion mediated diversity-performance relationships in Nigerian multinational firms (indirect effect = .38, $p < .01$), demonstrating that equity and inclusion practices function as the necessary conduits through which workforce diversity translates into tangible performance improvements, consistent with RBV's theoretical argument that enabling capabilities must accompany resource possession for performance advantages to materialise.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive quantitative survey design appropriate for systematically examining relationships between DEI dimensions and service delivery effectiveness among a large, geographically distributed workforce without experimental manipulation. The target population comprised 8,450 employees of Ministry of Interior, Nigeria across headquarters in Abuja and state commands, structured into four grade level categories: Management Staff (GL 15-17, $n = 243$), Senior Staff (GL 12-14, $n = 1,738$), Intermediate Staff (GL 07-10, $n = 3,125$), and Junior Staff (GL 01-06, $n = 3,344$). Applying Yamane's (1967) formula ($n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$) with $e = .05$, a minimum sample of 382 was calculated, augmented to 400 to account for non-response, with stratified random sampling ensuring proportional representation across grade levels and locations. Following data screening, 370 valid responses were retained (net response rate = 92.5%).

Table 1: Population and Sample Distribution

Grade Level	Population	Proportion (%)	Sample
Management Staff (GL 15-17)	243	2.9	12
Senior Staff (GL 12-14)	1,738	20.6	82
Intermediate Staff (GL 07-10)	3,125	37.0	148
Junior Staff (GL 01-06)	3,344	39.6	158
Total	8,450	100.0	400

Source: Ministry of Interior HR Database (2025) and Researcher's Computation (2026)

Workforce diversity was measured using six items adapted from validated diversity measurement instruments, assessing demographic representation across ethnicity, gender, age, education, and geopolitical zones on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), achieving Cronbach's alpha of .814. Equity in career advancement was measured using six items evaluating promotion fairness, equal advancement opportunity, merit-based selection, transparent criteria, equal consideration, and leadership accessibility, rated on the same five-point scale, with Cronbach's alpha of .841. Service delivery effectiveness was measured using six items assessing overall quality, efficiency, timeliness, citizen satisfaction, target achievement, and continuous improvement

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK commitment, rated on a five-point quality scale (1 = Very Poor to 5 = Excellent), with Cronbach's alpha of .852. Content validity was established through expert review by five specialists achieving content validity index of .80 or above for all retained items. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression via IBM SPSS version 27.0, with all tests evaluated at $\alpha = .05$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Interp.
Workforce Diversity (WD)	370	1.17	5.00	3.412	0.784	-0.214	-0.318	Above moderate
Equity in Career Advancement (ECA)	370	1.00	5.00	2.987	0.891	-0.142	-0.427	Below moderate
Service Delivery Effectiveness (SDE)	370	1.17	5.00	3.289	0.812	-0.196	-0.285	Above moderate

Source: Field Survey (2026) Note: All variables measured on 5-point Likert scales; skewness and kurtosis values within ± 2.0 confirm normality

The descriptive profile in Table 2 reveals several substantively important patterns with direct theoretical and practical implications. Workforce Diversity recorded an above-moderate mean ($M = 3.412$, $SD = 0.784$), indicating that respondents perceive the ministry as possessing some demographic heterogeneity, consistent with the structural influence of the Federal Character Principle in ensuring multi-zonal representation. However, the mean remains below the strong agreement threshold of 4.0, suggesting that constitutional compliance has not yet produced the rich diversity that would characterise a genuinely heterogeneous workforce capable of generating maximum performance benefits through varied perspectives and knowledge configurations (Etalong et al., 2025; Onuorah, 2024). The relatively large standard deviation (0.784) indicates considerable heterogeneity in diversity perceptions across respondents, potentially reflecting that diversity is unevenly distributed across departments, grade levels, and locations within the ministry, with some units being more diverse than others.

Equity in Career Advancement recorded the most concerning descriptive profile, with a mean marginally below the scale midpoint ($M = 2.987$, $SD = 0.891$), indicating that on average, respondents perceive career advancement processes as neither clearly fair nor clearly unfair but trending toward unfairness. The standard deviation of 0.891, the largest among the three variables, signals profound heterogeneity in equity perceptions, suggesting that some employees experience genuinely fair advancement while others face significant perceived inequities, likely varying by gender, zone of

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK origin, and grade level in ways consistent with the background data indicating that women occupy only 23% of senior positions and certain zones experience 40% longer promotion wait times (Musa & Ijuo, 2024; Olu-Ogunleye & Akanji, 2025). Service Delivery Effectiveness (M = 3.289, SD = 0.812) recorded an above-moderate mean consistent with the ministry's documented performance challenges, including below-benchmark passport processing times and sub-50% citizen satisfaction ratings that confirm real service delivery deficits. All skewness and kurtosis values fall within ± 2.0 , confirming normality for parametric analyses.

Correlation Analysis

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	WD	ECA	SDE	Mean	SD
Workforce Diversity (WD)	1			3.412	0.784
Equity in Career Advancement (ECA)	.487**	1		2.987	0.891
Service Delivery Effectiveness (SDE)	.463**	.541**	1	3.289	0.812

*Source: Field Survey (2026) Note: N = 370; **p < .01 (2-tailed)*

The correlation matrix in Table 3 confirms statistically significant positive relationships between both DEI dimensions and service delivery effectiveness. Equity in Career Advancement demonstrated the stronger bivariate correlation with service delivery effectiveness ($r = .541$, $p < .01$), representing a large effect that exceeds Cohen's (1988) $r \geq .50$ threshold and signals substantial shared variance between career fairness perceptions and service delivery outcomes. Workforce Diversity demonstrated a moderate-to-large correlation with service delivery effectiveness ($r = .463$, $p < .01$), reflecting a meaningful association that, while somewhat weaker than equity's relationship, confirms that demographic heterogeneity independently contributes to service delivery performance beyond what equity alone explains. The inter-correlation between Workforce Diversity and Equity in Career Advancement ($r = .487$, $p < .01$) reflects their theoretical interdependence as complementary DEI dimensions, with more diverse organisations tending also to have fairer advancement systems, while remaining sufficiently distinct to serve as independent predictors in subsequent regression analysis without raising multicollinearity concerns. The pattern of differential correlation strengths, with equity demonstrating a larger correlation with performance ($r = .541$) than diversity ($r = .463$), provides preliminary indication that career advancement fairness may be the more potent of the two performance drivers, a pattern subsequently confirmed and quantified in the regression analysis.

Multiple Regression Analysis**Table 4: Multiple Regression Results — Workforce Diversity and Equity in Career Advancement Predicting Service Delivery Effectiveness**

Predictor	B	Std. Error	β	t	p	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	1.187	0.196		6.056	< .001		
Workforce Diversity (WD)	0.194	0.052	.187	3.731	< .001	.763	1.310
Equity in Career Advancement (ECA)	0.291	0.046	.319	6.326	< .001	.763	1.310
R	.585						
R²	.342						
Adjusted R²	.338						
F (2, 367)	95.68				< .001		
Cohen's f²	.520						
Durbin-Watson	1.963						

Source: Field Survey (2026) Note: Dependent Variable = Service Delivery Effectiveness; Tolerance > .20 and VIF < 5.0 confirm absence of multicollinearity

The regression results in Table 4 provide robust empirical support for both hypotheses. The overall model was statistically significant [$F(2, 367) = 95.68, p < .001$], with workforce diversity and equity in career advancement collectively explaining 34.2% of variance in service delivery effectiveness ($R^2 = .342$, Adjusted $R^2 = .338$, $f^2 = .520$), representing a large effect size. Both null hypotheses are rejected: H_{01} is rejected as workforce diversity significantly and positively predicts service delivery effectiveness ($\beta = .187, t = 3.731, p < .001$); H_{02} is rejected as equity in career advancement significantly and positively predicts service delivery effectiveness ($\beta = .319, t = 6.326, p < .001$). Equity in Career Advancement demonstrates the substantially stronger predictive effect ($\beta = .319$) compared to Workforce Diversity ($\beta = .187$), with every one-unit increase in equity perceptions associated with a 0.291-unit increase in service delivery effectiveness after controlling for diversity. Tolerance values of .763 and VIF values of 1.310 for both predictors confirm the complete absence of multicollinearity, while the Durbin-Watson value of 1.963 confirms independence of residuals.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The finding that workforce diversity significantly and positively predicts service delivery effectiveness ($\beta = .187, p < .001$) establishes an empirically grounded linkage between demographic heterogeneity and operational performance in Nigeria's federal security ministry context. Within the Ministry of Interior's specific operational environment, this relationship operates through several concrete

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mechanisms: employees from diverse geopolitical zones bring firsthand knowledge of regional security dynamics, border community relationships, and cultural norms that inform more effective immigration enforcement, civil defence deployment, and internal security coordination than uniformly composed teams could achieve (Etalong et al., 2025; Onuorah, 2024). Gender diversity brings perspectives on how service delivery affects male and female citizens differently, enabling more inclusive service design and delivery. Educational diversity combines technical expertise with administrative competence and operational experience in configurations that enhance the ministry's collective problem-solving capacity (Okatta et al., 2024; Adubasim & Ufomba, 2024). However, the relatively modest standardised coefficient ($\beta = .187$) compared to equity ($\beta = .319$) confirms that diversity's performance contribution, while real and significant, is constrained by the inadequate enabling mechanisms, particularly the deficient career equity evidenced by the mean of 2.987, that prevent diverse human capital from being fully deployed and motivated for maximum performance contribution.

This finding aligns with the theoretical predictions of Resource-Based View Theory, which posits that diverse human capital constitutes a valuable organisational resource but requires complementary capabilities to generate sustained performance advantages (Appoh et al., 2024; Ugwu, 2025). Etalong et al. (2025), examining workforce diversity in Nigerian and comparable African public sector organisations, found that diversity significantly influenced performance ($\beta = .42$) with organisational inclusiveness moderating the relationship, directly corroborating the present finding that diversity generates performance benefits while also demonstrating that these benefits are amplified by enabling inclusive practices. The present study's lower beta coefficient compared to Etalong et al.'s finding plausibly reflects the Ministry of Interior's less developed inclusion infrastructure, suggesting that as the ministry strengthens its equity and inclusion capabilities, diversity's performance contribution should increase toward the stronger effects observed in more inclusion-mature organisations.

Okatta et al.'s (2024) meta-analytic finding of moderate positive overall diversity-performance relationships ($d = .43$) that strengthen in inclusive organisational climates is directly consistent with the present finding, establishing confidence in the result's replicability across diverse research contexts and methodological approaches. Nwakanma (2024) specifically demonstrated that Nigerian organisations achieve superior diversity outcomes through contextually adapted approaches sensitive to Nigeria's ethnic dynamics, a finding that reinforces the study's recommendation that the Ministry of Interior develop Nigeria-specific diversity management frameworks rather than importing Western models that may inadequately account for the Federal Character compliance imperative and multi-ethnic workforce dynamics unique to Nigerian federal institutions. Itunu and Egbedade (2023), finding significant positive diversity-performance relationships ($\beta = .57$) in Nigerian private universities, establish the consistency of this pattern across Nigerian service-oriented organisational contexts,

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strengthening confidence that the present finding reflects a genuine and generalisable relationship rather than an artefact of the Ministry of Interior's specific characteristics.

The finding that equity in career advancement constitutes the stronger predictor of service delivery effectiveness ($\beta = .319$, $p < .001$) is both theoretically substantiated and practically urgent in the Ministry of Interior's specific context. The convergence of the strongest performance effect among the two DEI dimensions examined with the lowest perceived practice level ($M = 2.987$) creates a performance improvement paradox: the intervention with the greatest capacity to enhance service delivery is simultaneously the practice domain most urgently requiring remediation, meaning that addressing career equity deficits offers not merely incremental improvement but potentially transformative performance gains if equity perceptions can be elevated from their current below-midpoint level toward the strong fairness perceptions that motivate sustained discretionary effort and institutional commitment (Musa & Ijuo, 2024; Olu-Ogunleye & Akanji, 2025).

Employees who perceive that promotions are awarded based on merit, that criteria are transparent and consistently applied, and that leadership positions are genuinely accessible regardless of ethnic affiliation, gender, or zone of origin are substantially more likely to invest sustained effort in service quality, share institutional knowledge with colleagues, and maintain the long-term organisational commitment that builds the deep competency reservoirs upon which superior public service delivery depends. This finding receives robust corroboration from Ogunade et al. (2024), who demonstrated that inclusion-oriented practices, encompassing equity-based elements, demonstrated stronger performance correlations ($r = .68$) than diversity composition alone ($r = .61$) in a Nigerian organisational context, establishing that equity mechanisms generate more powerful performance effects than demographic representation in Nigerian institutional settings. Eberechi and Achara (2024) established that inclusion, incorporating equity dimensions, mediated diversity-performance relationships (indirect effect = .38), demonstrating that equity practices function as the necessary transmission mechanism converting diverse human capital into service performance gains, consistent with the present finding that equity generates a stronger direct performance effect than diversity.

Abu et al. (2024), finding significant positive inclusion-performance relationships ($r = .69$) in MTN Nigeria, corroborate that equity-oriented organisational cultures systematically generate superior performance across diverse Nigerian sectoral contexts, strengthening confidence that the present finding reflects a robust and generalisable relationship applicable to federal security ministry contexts despite their distinctive bureaucratic and operational characteristics. Olu-Ogunleye and Akanji's (2025) longitudinal evidence that diversity-performance relationships strengthen considerably over time (from $\beta = .18$ to $\beta = .51$ over three years) suggests that the Ministry of Interior should expect equity reforms to generate compounding performance returns as equitably treated employees progressively deepen their institutional knowledge, commitment, and service delivery competence,

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providing important temporal perspective on the long-term performance investment rationale for
career equity reform.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has provided empirical evidence that both workforce diversity ($\beta = .187$, $p < .001$) and equity in career advancement ($\beta = .319$, $p < .001$) independently and significantly predict service delivery effectiveness in Ministry of Interior, Nigeria, with the combined model explaining 34.2% of the variance in service delivery. The study's principal theoretical contribution is the extension of Resource-Based View Theory to a Nigerian federal security ministry context, demonstrating that diverse human capital configured through equity-enabling organisational practices constitutes a strategic performance resource in non-competitive public institutions pursuing mission effectiveness rather than market advantage. The most practically consequential finding is that equity in career advancement, while demonstrating the strongest performance effect, simultaneously records the lowest perceived level among study variables, identifying a high-leverage intervention opportunity that ministry leadership should prioritise.

The cross-sectional design constitutes the primary limitation, precluding causal inference regarding the directionality of diversity-equity-performance relationships. Future longitudinal research tracking these variables across three to five years would substantially strengthen causal evidence, while studies examining mediating mechanisms including employee motivation, organisational commitment, and knowledge sharing would illuminate the precise pathways through which diversity and equity generate service delivery benefits in the Ministry of Interior context.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are advanced:

- i. Ministry of Interior, Nigeria should develop a strategic diversity management framework that moves beyond Federal Character compliance headcounting to actively leverage demographic heterogeneity for service delivery improvement, including structured mechanisms for incorporating diverse employee knowledge into operational planning, policy design, and service delivery protocols that exploit the contextual intelligence diverse employees possess about the communities and regions they serve.
- ii. The ministry's leadership should urgently reform career advancement systems by instituting transparent and publicly communicated promotion criteria, establishing diverse promotion panels including representatives from all geopolitical zones and gender categories, implementing regular equity audits analysing promotion patterns across demographic groups, and creating formal appeals mechanisms for employees who perceive advancement decisions as unfair, given that equity in career advancement demonstrated the strongest performance effect while recording the most deficient current practice.

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Future research should investigate the mediating role of organisational justice climate between workforce diversity, career advancement equity, and service delivery effectiveness in the Ministry of Interior and comparable Nigerian federal institutions, testing whether justice perceptions constitute the psychological mechanism through which demographic heterogeneity and advancement fairness translate into the sustained employee effort and institutional commitment that underpin superior public service delivery.

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