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## Workplace Discrimination and Talent Retention: Religious Affiliation Moderating Effect

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### **Abstract:**

*This study examined the moderating effect of religious affiliation on the relationship between workplace discrimination and talent retention in selected private and public Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. It argues that in spite of the worldwide acceptance of the law as an appropriate instrument for dealing with workplace discrimination challenges and the conscious efforts of organisations to rid themselves of such practices, workplace discrimination remains a global reality. Survey research design was adopted with the use of a questionnaire as the research instrument. The study employed stratified sampling technique to the selected universities situated in Egba, Ijebu, Remo, and Yewa/Awori with a sample size of 1282 respondents. The instrument was validated before use. Hierarchical Regression Analysis was employed to draw inference on the effect of religious affiliation on the relationship between workplace discrimination and talent retention. The study provided theoretical and statistical evidences to show that religious affiliation has negative and significant moderating effect on the relationship between workplace discrimination and talent retention. The results show a statistically significant relationship between workplace discrimination and talent retention with religious affiliation moderating the interaction. It was concluded that religious affiliation has influence on the relationship between workplace discrimination and talent retention.*

**Keywords:** Talent retention, workplace discrimination, religious affiliation, talent identity, intellectual capital contributions

### **1. Introduction**

The concern for workplace discrimination arises from the assumption that it causes disparity, organisational injustices, and inequity among employees of different groups or associations within an organisation (Gregory & Thompson, 2010; Robbins & Judge, 2014; Jie, Ashok, Brian & Manjit, 2009). Leila (2014) describes workplace discrimination as a managerial task that demands serious attention because its after-effect amplifies the intention of talented employees to leave and hinders organisation from winning a competitive advantage. Organisations are rarely giving close attention to religious affiliation in explaining inequity, injustices and discrimination, rather, attention has always been more on disability, ethnicity, gender, race, and sexual orientation, with others sharing relationship with workplace discrimination (Channar, Abbassi & Ujan, 2011; Hoobler, Lemmon & Wayne, 2011). The quest for religious affiliation is very popular due to the on-going confusion about organisational identity, organisational culture, and operating policies that frequently follow an impression of lack of job security for employees in various organisations (Giacolone & Jurkiewicz, 2003).

Globally, religious discrimination dispute is developing quickly compare to any other forms of discrimination. Religion expression has awakened strong feelings and opinions and the workplace is nonexclusive of this challenge. According to Webley (2011), there is a religious background to virtually all organisational corporate or social practices and the way organisation interacts with this is essential if it must adhere to its core values. According to the 2013 survey in the United State of America, a factor contributing to workplace discrimination is religious identity. It is not incredible to discover that the prejudice among evangelicals and nonbelievers in the workplace is alarming. Nearly 60% atheists' employees said organization looks down on their beliefs, and nearly 60% of white evangelicals agreed that discrimination against Christian employees have become a serious challenge as discrimination against other religious minorities.

Adetayo and Odogwu (2017) reported that in Africa, Kano, Nigeria, about fifteen (15) Shiite members and one (1) policeman lost their lives in the workplace during a clash between members of the sect and the police while claiming right for freedom of worship. Olojo (2014) earlier reported that between June 2006 and May 2014, violent deaths caused by religious discrimination accounts for four thousand and forty-one (4041) people. From the year 2006 to 2009, statistic showed a rapid increase in number of deaths caused by religious discrimination from ten (10) to one thousand and four

(1004) casualties. In the year 2010, the figure dropped to seven hundred and eight (708) casualties, but in 2011, it escalated to one thousand one-hundred and seventy-nine (1179). Year 2011 to date has witnessed a rapid increase from one thousand one-hundred and seventy-nine (1179) to above four thousand and forty-one (4041) casualties.

This eventually has led to migration of human capital from the north to the south and the east thereby causing increase in unemployment population in the regions and economic talent degradation in the north (IFRA, 2014). Organisation integrity is constantly being investigated detailing human resource challenges such as business ethics, corporate contributions, community development, environmental policies, human right, and workplace success (Giacalone, *et al.* 2003). These perhaps, only religiously motivated talented employees could answer. Developing a spiritual vision through sincere religious affiliation may limit discrimination and connect employee firmly to his organisation. It is based on this assumption that the researchers examine the moderating effect of religious affiliation on the relationship between workplace discrimination and talent retention in private and public Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria.

## 2. Literature Review

Religious discrimination is explained as any attempt to regard or indulge a person or group of persons differently from the other due to their sensations or acts in relation to a given religion (Ghumman & Jackson, 2008). According to Robbins and Judge (2014), disagreements sometimes occur among people that do not embrace the same faith. Organisations whose employees practice different religions are not immune to larger disputes among the workforce. This often germinates into prejudice among co-workers (Day, 2005).

In the same vein, Benefiel, Fry and Geigle (2014) submit that continuous affirmation of faith in the workplace is a threat to oneness among organisation members. Meanwhile, Duchon and Plowman (2005) view religion at workplace in the following terms: awareness that employees have inner life, assumption that employees desire to find work meaningful, and commitment by organisation to serve as a context or community for spiritual growth. Religion in workplace establishes the aspect of spirituality that makes employees to be resolute and focused having the willingness to remain with the organisation (Paloutzian, Emmons & Keortge, 2003). Other scholars (Jonathan & Charles, 2015; Miller, 2007; Reder, 1982) state that religion in workplace raises organisational performance and found spirituality-based organisational cultures as the most productive and much profitable in the stock market. In terms of productivity and sustainability, rising assertions suggest that spiritually healthy workplace performs better in productivity and sustainability of talent (Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Elm, 2003; Fry, Hannah, Noel & Walumbwa, 2011; Garcia-Zamor, 2003).

Empirically, Gebert, Boenner, Kearney, KingJr, Zhang, and Song (2014) examined a study on the movement of integration of faith at work emphasising on the centrality of religion and how valuable is it to business organisations. Miller (2007) depicts faith as an instrument used in shaping and informing value system, ethics, character, leadership, and attitude toward work. The work of Hicks (2009) on religion and workplace concurs with Miller (2007) assertion that employees should not be discouraged to leave their faith at home. The author claims that efficient leadership creates enabling atmosphere for clear expression of religion and due respect to one another's faith. Supporting this view, Giacalone, *et al.* (2003) assert that religion in workplace is a basic structure of organisational value supported by custom which elevate the employees' knowledge, opinions and skills beyond work process, but rather enhancing connections in a manner that can provide happiness. The literature has been able to cover the concept, theory and empirical study of religious discrimination and its effect in the workplace on performance, sustainability and productivity. The importance of this study borders on religious affiliation as a moderator of workplace discrimination and talent retention. Significant to the research also is the geographical domain of this study. This is being investigated because most similar researches have not considered solution to managerial malpractices relating to the construct of workplace discrimination and talent retention with the dynamics of religious affiliation. This study shall address this gap.

The paper was underpinned on Subordinate Adaptation Theory propounded by Schwalbe, Godwin, Holden, Schrock, Thompson and Wolkomir (2000). Subordinate Adaptation Theory explains the constructs of religious affiliation to solve the problems of discrimination. The study depicts ways in which employees retreat when it comes to combating religious discrimination since religious affiliation receives considerable discrimination in workplace. Schwalbe, *et al.* (2000) concerns themselves mostly with how those who often experience discrimination could cope or resist those conditions at workplace. They suggest four ways by which one can accept one's inferior status within an institution as follows: to fit into the dominant group for some sort of benefits so as to trade power for patronage, form subgroups or alternative subcultures with those of similar experiences in an attempt to create alternative spaces of power and prestige, accept one's inferior position while attempting to make the environment more tolerable or creating a niche to exploit and undermine the system (hustling), and lastly refusing to remain a participant in the environment (dropping out) or quitting. Famous contributor to the first two options of this theory is Benefiel, Fry and Geigle (2014). The thrust of this theory is that the constructs of workplace discrimination in the study and the moderating variable of religious affiliation do enhance talent retention.

## 3. Methodological Approach

This research is a quantitative study and it examined the moderating effect of religious affiliation on the relationship between workplace discrimination and talent retention capturing private and public universities in the four geographical zones of Ogun State. It consists of academic and non-academic staff of six universities (private and public) selected through stratification technique across Egba, Ijebu, Remo and Yewa/Awori Land. The target population is 6457. Slovin (1992) formula for calculating sample size for finite population was adopted with accepted error limit of 0.025 on the basis of 95% confidence level to arrive at the sample size of 1282. Further, the research instrument's content and

construct validity tests were conducted. The Cronbach's alpha co-efficient ranging from 0.941 to 0.786 was obtained for the constructs of talent retention, workplace discrimination and religious affiliation respectively.

The econometric equation is stated thus;

$$Y=f(X)$$

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$$X= \text{Workplace Discrimination (WPD)}$$

$$z_1= \text{Religious Affiliation (RA)}$$

$$\text{TR} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{WPD} + z_1 \text{RA} + \beta_3 \text{WPDRA} + \mu$$

Where

TR=Talent Retention----Dependent Variable

WPD=Workplace Discrimination----Independent Variable

$\beta_0$  = Constant term

$\beta_1$  = Coefficient of Workplace Discrimination

$z_1$  = Coefficient of Religious Affiliation

$\beta_3$  = Coefficient of Workplace Discrimination and Religious Affiliation

$\mu_j$  = Error Term (Stochastic variable)

#### 4. Results and Findings

The results of religious affiliation on the relationship between talent retention and work place discrimination were presented on Table 1. The results show workplace discrimination and religious affiliation explained 33.1% of the variation in talent retention. Under change statistics, the results reveal that the R<sup>2</sup> change increased by 0.2% from 0.331 to 0.333 (R<sup>2</sup> change=0.002) when the interaction variable (workplace discrimination\*religious affiliation) was added.

Model Summary									
Model 1	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error	Change Statistics				
					R <sup>2</sup> Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	0.575 <sup>a</sup>	0.331	0.330	8.90135	0.331	321.896	2	1303	0.000
2	0.577 <sup>b</sup>	0.333	0.331	8.88920	0.002	4.565	1	1302	0.033

Table 1

Source: Field Survey, 2016

a. Predictors: (Constant), Religious Affiliation, Workplace Discrimination, Workplace Discrimination X Religious Affiliation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Religious Affiliation, Workplace Discrimination

The Overall Significance						
Model 2		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	51010.286	2	25505.143	321.896	0.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	103241.911	1303	79.234		
	Total	154252.197	1305			
2	Regression	51370.990	3	17123.663	216.706	0.000 <sup>c</sup>
	Residual	102881.207	1302	79.018		
	Total	154252.197	1305			

Table 2

Source: Field Survey, 2016

a. Dependent Variable: Talent Retention

b. Predictors: (Constant), Religious Affiliation, Workplace Discrimination

c. Predictors: (Constant), Religious Affiliation, Workplace Discrimination, Workplace Discrimination x Religious Affiliation

Model 3		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. E	Beta			Tol	VIF
1	(Constant)	23.06	1.981		11.64	0.000		
	Workplace Discrimination	0.167	0.007	0.573	25.24	0.000	0.997	1.00
	Religious Affiliation	-0.01	0.015	-0.029	-1.26	0.209	0.997	1.00
2	(Constant)	10.63	6.147		1.73	0.084		
	Workplace Discrimination	0.169	0.007	0.577	25.36	0.000	0.989	1.01
	Religious Affiliation	0.210	0.108	0.317	1.94	0.052	0.019	51.92
	Workplace Discrimination x Religious Affiliation	-0.001	0.000	-0.348	-2.14	0.033	0.019	51.86

Table 3  
Source: Field Survey, 2016

The change was statistically significant at  $\alpha=0.000$  ( $p$ -value=0.000). The results show a statistically significant relationship between workplace discrimination, religious affiliation and the interaction when  $F= 321.896$ ,  $p$ -value=0.000) as revealed in Table 2. The results in model 3 Table 1 (c) show statistically significant regression coefficients for workplace discrimination ( $\beta=0.169$ ,  $p$ -value=0.000) indicating that there is a linear dependence of talent retention on workplace discrimination. Also, there is a statistically significant relationship between the religious affiliation and talent retention ( $\beta=0.210$ ,  $p$ -value=0.052). Similarly, statistically linear and negative relationship of talent retention on the interaction term of workplace discrimination and religious affiliation was detected ( $\beta= -0.001$ ,  $p=0.232$ ). This implies that changes in the religious affiliation may negatively affect workplace discrimination and religious affiliation relationship as the direction of the relationship is now negative. From the findings, the regression equation used to estimate the moderating effect of religious affiliation on the workplace discrimination and talent retention relationship is stated as follows:

$$TR = 10.630 + 0.169RA + 0.210WPD - 0.001RA*WPD$$

Where:

TR = Talent Retention

RA = Religious Affiliation

WPD = Work Place Discrimination

RA\*WPD = Interaction of Religious Affiliation and Work Place Discrimination

## 5. Discussion

The result of Table 1 reveals that for a 1point increase in the religious affiliation, talent retention is predicted to have a difference of 0.169, given that, workplace discrimination is held constant. The interpretation of the regression coefficients for the interaction term in this equation shows that there are 0.001 differences between the co-efficient of talent retention on workplace discrimination with emphasis on religious affiliation exhibiting negative significant effect on talent retention, an indication that religious affiliation fuels discrimination which leads to poor talent retention among the surveyed institutions. This outcome is being established from the previous study carried out by several authors. For example; Day (2005) had earlier found that organisations whose employees practice different religions are not immune to larger disputes among the workforce. This as well is confirmed by Leila (2014) who maintained that religious affiliation often germinates into prejudice among co-workers. Ghumman, Ryan, Barclay and Markel (2013) established the same thought while depicting that one of the reasons while discrimination escalates in the workplace is as a result of great diversity in religions. It is distilled that since the opinions and perception of employees differ according to religious background and affiliation within the workplace, this in a way will have effect on their perceptions and beliefs in the organisational vision, mission and objectives. This eventually determines the contribution level of employees to organisation success.

In that case, despite organisation's effort to keep equal religious liberty of employees with the demands of business, workplace discrimination resulting from religious affiliation remains a challenge for Human Resource managers. Invariably, the difference in opinions and perceptions according to employees' religious affiliation ideology and faith create a forum for discrimination and consequent retention challenges for human resource managers. The findings in this paper show that increase in religious affiliation leads to a corresponding increase in inability of the organisation to retain its talents as workplace discrimination persists. The implication to organisations and human resource managers however, is to develop in its policies unbiased organisational culture that will represent the philosophy and image that organisations stand for. This culture must be constantly passed on to the employees through effective communication, On the Job Training and other forms of training suitable for addressing the challenge. More importantly is the fact that, organisational culture training must not as well be underestimated at the point of recruitment and selection of new employees. This will enable them to understand the religion ideology and other organisational beliefs and practices that can be easily mistaken to be discriminatory before accepting the offer of the employment. According to Ghumman, *et al.* (2013), organization protects itself when it sensitizes its employees on their responsibilities to any organisational belief or ideology. There

might be a need for organisation or HR departments to review existing policies concerning religious affiliation in this regard. This will help in building a more inclusive workplace free from discrimination or perception of it.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study had examined the moderating effect of religious affiliation on the relationship between workplace discrimination and talent retention in universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The theoretical contribution suggests a varied view to Schwalbe, *et al.* (2000) assumption, in that, what defines a talented employee is beyond organisational commitment to avoiding discrimination, but also that individual talented employee is self-focused on results delivery, actualisation of organisation vision, mission and objectives that provide rightful talent identity and obligations of a faithful steward. Hence, discrimination orchestrated through religious affiliation lacks efficacy where organisation holds inestimable value to talent and intellectual capital contributions. Therefore, the researcher contributes to the body of existing knowledge by proposing Stewardship Theory of Discrimination and Retention (STDR) as explained before.

Meanwhile, the result of the hypothesis tested prescribed that the moderating effect of religious affiliation on the relationship between workplace discrimination and talent retention is negative and statistically significant ( $\beta = -0.001$ ,  $R^2$  Change=0.002 or 0.2%,  $p < 0.05$ ). The outcome shows that religious affiliation is a significant moderating factor of the relationship between workplace discrimination and talent retention. The study has exposed a critical hidden bias of religious affiliation discrimination in universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. In this regard, management should intensify efforts on enacting and implementing human resource drivable policies that can fit closely with proper moderation of religious affairs in the universities. Fair representation among groups at every level of management, and equal opportunity in employment condition benefits to individual employees should be intensified in order to limit to the barest minimum the challenges brought by the phenomenon. Religious interferences should also be moderated by the management of universities in Ogun State with maximum care and concern for legitimate right for freedom of religious identity to forecast unity, peace, vision, mission and objectives-driven diversified institutional workforce.

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