

**DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION PRACTICES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON  
EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT AND INNOVATION OF HOTELS IN RIVERS STATE.**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study examined the influence of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices on employee commitment and innovation in hotels in Rivers State. The research aimed to determine whether DEI practices significantly affect employee loyalty and the capacity for innovative service delivery in the hospitality sector. The population comprised 86 three-star hotels in Rivers State, from which Purposive sampling was used to select three respondents from each hotel, resulting in 183 participants. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire employing a five-point Likert scale and analyzed using multiple regression analysis with SPSS version 27. Findings revealed that DEI practices have a significant positive effect on employee commitment and innovation individually, and jointly predict both outcomes. The study concludes that DEI practices are critical drivers of workforce loyalty and creative performance in hotels. It recommends institutionalizing DEI policies, promoting inclusive leadership and training, and fostering a culture that leverages employee diversity for innovative solutions. These interventions can enhance organizational competitiveness, service quality, and sustainable workforce development in the hospitality industry.

**INTRODUCTION**

**Background to the study**

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices have emerged as critical drivers of organizational success, particularly in service-oriented sectors such as the hospitality industry. DEI refers to the strategies and policies implemented to ensure representation, fairness, and belonging among employees of varying genders, ethnicities, ages, abilities, and socio-cultural backgrounds (Shen et al., 2018). In the context of hotels, which rely heavily on human capital for service delivery and customer satisfaction, the adoption of DEI practices has been linked to enhanced employee engagement, commitment, and innovative performance (Roberson, 2019).

Employee commitment, defined as the psychological attachment and loyalty of employees to their organization, is crucial in hospitality settings where staff retention directly influences service quality and operational efficiency (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Studies have shown that organizations that actively promote DEI not only foster a sense of belonging and fairness among employees but also stimulate higher levels of engagement and organizational commitment (Sabharwal, 2014). By creating an inclusive environment, employees are more likely to feel valued and motivated, reducing turnover intentions and increasing dedication to organizational goals.

In addition, DEI practices have been associated with innovation, as diverse teams bring varied perspectives, problem-solving approaches, and creativity to organizational processes (Cox & Blake, 1991). In hotels, innovation can manifest in improved service delivery, new product offerings, and enhanced guest experiences. Evidence suggests that equitable and inclusive workplaces encourage open communication and collaborative ideation, which in turn leads to higher levels of creativity and innovation among employees (Shore et al., 2018).

Despite these documented benefits, many hotels in Rivers State face challenges in implementing effective DEI strategies, often due to limited awareness, cultural biases, or lack of formal policy frameworks. This gap underscores the need to investigate how DEI practices influence employee commitment and innovation within the local hospitality industry. Understanding these relationships

is vital for hotel managers aiming to strengthen workforce stability, enhance employee satisfaction, and foster innovative capacities that drive competitive advantage in the sector.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In recent years, the hospitality industry has become increasingly competitive, with hotels striving to attract and retain both customers and skilled employees. One of the key drivers of sustainable organizational performance is the ability to cultivate a committed and innovative workforce. However, despite growing awareness of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) as a strategic human resource practice, many hotels in Rivers State continue to face challenges related to employee disengagement, high turnover, and limited innovation outputs. Employee commitment in hotels is often influenced by perceptions of fairness, inclusivity, and recognition, yet there is evidence that many organizations fail to implement effective DEI policies, resulting in feelings of marginalization and reduced organizational loyalty among staff (Sabharwal, 2014). Furthermore, innovation, which is critical for service differentiation and customer satisfaction, can be hindered in environments where diversity of thought is not embraced or where employees do not feel psychologically safe to share ideas (Shore et al., 2018).

While studies have demonstrated the positive relationship between DEI practices and employee outcomes globally, there is a paucity of empirical evidence examining these relationships in the context of hotels in Rivers State. Specifically, it remains unclear how DEI initiatives influence employee commitment and whether such practices directly contribute to innovation in service delivery within local hotels. This gap poses a challenge for hotel management in devising strategies that maximize human capital potential, sustain workforce engagement, and promote creative organizational solutions. Thus, this study seeks to address the knowledge gap by investigating the influence of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices on employee commitment and innovation in hotels in Rivers State, providing insights that can inform human resource strategies and policy development in the local hospitality sector.

### **Research Objectives**

The main objective of the study is to determine diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Practices and Their Influence on Employee Commitment and Innovation of hotels in Rivers state.

1. To examine the influence of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices on employee commitment in hotels in Rivers State.
2. To assess the impact of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices on innovation within hotels in Rivers State.
3. To determine the combined effect of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices on both employee commitment and innovation in hotels in Rivers State.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices affect employee commitment in hotels in Rivers State?
2. What is the relationship between Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices and innovation in hotels in Rivers State?
3. To what extent do Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices jointly influence employee commitment and innovation in hotels in Rivers State?

### **Research Hypotheses**

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices have no significant effect on employee commitment in hotels in Rivers State.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices have no significant influence on innovation in hotels in Rivers State.

**H03:** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices do not jointly predict employee commitment and innovation in hotels in Rivers State.

## **Conceptual Review**

### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Practices**

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices constitute a strategic approach through which organizations deliberately foster a workforce that reflects differences in gender, age, ethnicity, cultural background, education, and thought (Shore et al., 2018). Diversity emphasizes the presence of varied characteristics among employees, equity focuses on ensuring fair treatment, access to opportunities, and resource allocation, while inclusion promotes a sense of belonging, encouraging all employees to contribute fully and authentically to organizational goals (Roberson, 2019).

In the hospitality sector, including hotels in Rivers State, DEI practices are particularly critical due to the people-centric nature of the industry, where employee interactions directly influence customer experiences and organizational reputation. DEI initiatives in hotels typically include recruitment policies aimed at hiring individuals from underrepresented groups, structured mentorship programs, leadership development programs that cultivate inclusive managerial behaviors, and transparent promotion and appraisal systems that reduce bias (Nishii, 2013). Moreover, DEI extends to training programs that sensitize employees on cultural competence, unconscious bias, and collaborative work, thereby promoting an inclusive organizational culture.

The strategic significance of DEI is evident in its impact on workforce outcomes. Organizations that implement robust DEI practices often report higher levels of employee engagement, satisfaction, and commitment, as employees perceive themselves as valued and fairly treated (Shore et al., 2018). Inclusion enhances psychological safety, enabling employees to share innovative ideas, challenge existing processes, and participate in decision-making without fear of discrimination or marginalization. In this way, DEI acts as a catalyst for innovation, driving creative problem-solving and continuous improvement in service delivery, which is vital for competitive advantage in the hospitality industry (Roberson, 2019).

Empirical studies have also demonstrated that DEI practices correlate positively with organizational loyalty and reduced turnover intentions. Employees who experience fair treatment, equitable opportunities, and a sense of belonging are more likely to commit to their organizations, contributing to stability in human capital and sustainable operational performance (Nishii, 2013). Additionally, DEI fosters team cohesion and collaboration, as diverse teams bring multiple perspectives to problem-solving, leading to innovative solutions that address customer needs effectively (Shore et al., 2018). Overall, DEI practices are not merely ethical or regulatory obligations but strategic organizational tools. In hotels, where employee performance directly impacts customer satisfaction, fostering diversity, ensuring equity, and promoting inclusion can enhance employee commitment, stimulate innovation, and improve overall organizational effectiveness. Implementing DEI is therefore a multidimensional approach that integrates human capital management with organizational strategy to drive both employee and business outcomes.

### **Employee Commitment**

Employee commitment refers to the psychological attachment, loyalty, and dedication that an individual develops toward their organization, often reflected in their willingness to remain, contribute, and align personal goals with organizational objectives (Meyer et al., 2019). This construct is multidimensional, commonly categorized into **affective commitment**, which is the emotional attachment to the organization; **continuance commitment**, reflecting the perceived costs associated with leaving; and **normative commitment**, which represents a sense of moral obligation to stay (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

In the hotel industry, employee commitment is critical because the sector relies heavily on human interactions and service quality. Employees who are committed tend to demonstrate higher job

performance, provide superior customer service, and exhibit reduced turnover intentions, which in turn contributes to organizational stability and enhanced reputation (Kundu & Mor, 2017). Commitment also fosters discretionary effort, where employees willingly go beyond their formal job requirements to achieve organizational goals.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices play a pivotal role in nurturing employee commitment. By ensuring equitable treatment, fair promotion opportunities, and recognition of diverse contributions, DEI initiatives foster a workplace environment where employees feel valued, respected, and supported. Employees perceiving fairness and inclusivity are more likely to develop affective commitment, experience lower turnover intentions, and remain engaged with organizational goals (Shore et al., 2018). Moreover, inclusive practices that promote belonging and equitable access to resources strengthen normative commitment, as employees feel a moral and social responsibility to reciprocate organizational support through continued loyalty and effort.

Empirical studies in hospitality contexts have highlighted the positive relationship between DEI practices and employee commitment. For instance, hotels implementing inclusive recruitment, equitable appraisal systems, and diversity training programs reported higher levels of affective and normative commitment among staff, which translated into improved service delivery and innovation (Roberson, 2019). Consequently, employee commitment is both an outcome of DEI practices and a driver of organizational effectiveness, particularly in service-oriented industries like hotels, where employee engagement directly impacts customer satisfaction and operational performance.

### **Innovation in Hotels**

Innovation in hotels refers to the introduction and implementation of new ideas, processes, services, or products that enhance operational efficiency, improve guest experiences, or strengthen competitive advantage (Jansen et al., 2015). In a highly dynamic hospitality industry, innovation is critical to sustaining growth, adapting to changing customer preferences, and maintaining a strong market position. Hotels that foster a culture of creativity, learning, and openness are better positioned to generate novel solutions that improve both service quality and internal operations.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices play a pivotal role in stimulating innovation within hotel settings. By promoting diverse teams, equitable treatment, and inclusive decision-making, DEI encourages employees from varied backgrounds to contribute unique perspectives and challenge conventional approaches (Shore et al., 2018). When employees feel respected, valued, and empowered to share ideas without fear of bias or discrimination, the organization benefits from richer problem-solving capabilities, enhanced creativity, and a broader range of innovative solutions (Ely & Thomas, 2020).

Empirical evidence suggests that inclusive workplaces positively influence innovation outcomes. Hotels that integrate DEI into recruitment, training, and leadership development often report higher rates of idea generation, more effective adaptation to market demands, and increased service quality. For example, staff representing diverse cultural, educational, and experiential backgrounds are more likely to identify unmet guest needs, suggest novel service enhancements, and implement operational improvements that increase guest satisfaction (Jansen et al., 2015). Furthermore, organizations with strong DEI practices are better equipped to respond to global tourism trends and technological disruptions, as diverse teams provide multiple lenses through which challenges and opportunities are assessed. Overall, innovation in hotels is not solely a product of technology or investment but is significantly shaped by human capital practices that emphasize inclusivity and equity. DEI creates an environment in which creativity thrives, employees are engaged, and the organization continually adapts to deliver superior value to guests. Therefore, linking DEI practices to innovation is essential for understanding how human resource strategies can drive competitive advantage in the hospitality sector.

### **Relationship Between DEI, Employee Commitment, and Innovation**

Empirical evidence suggests that DEI practices positively influence both employee commitment and innovation. Inclusive workplaces enhance employees' sense of belonging and fairness, leading to stronger commitment and reduced turnover (Roberson, 2019). Additionally, diverse teams contribute multiple viewpoints, which enhance creativity and the generation of innovative solutions, crucial for service-oriented industries like hotels (Nishii, 2013). In Rivers State, hotels face increasing competition and evolving customer expectations, making DEI-driven commitment and innovation essential for sustainable performance and organizational growth. Collectively, these concepts suggest that DEI practices serve as a strategic driver, promoting organizational outcomes by enhancing both employee commitment and innovation. By integrating DEI principles, hotels can create environments where employees feel valued, motivated, and empowered to contribute novel ideas, ultimately improving both human capital outcomes and service quality.

### **Theoretical Review**

The study of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices, employee commitment, and innovation in organizational contexts can be anchored on several theoretical perspectives. These theories provide a framework for understanding how DEI initiatives influence employee attitudes, behaviors, and organizational outcomes in the hospitality sector.

#### **Social Identity Theory (SIT)**

Social Identity Theory, proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), posits that individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups, influencing self-concept and behavior. Employees derive part of their identity from their membership in groups and tend to favor in-group members. In organizational contexts, DEI practices that promote inclusivity and reduce discrimination can minimize intergroup bias and create a sense of belonging. When employees perceive that the organization values diverse identities and treats all groups fairly, they are more likely to develop stronger affective commitment to the organization (Shore et al., 2018). In hotels, fostering a socially inclusive environment helps employees feel valued and recognized, thereby enhancing loyalty and engagement, which in turn can stimulate innovative thinking by allowing diverse perspectives to be expressed.

#### **Equity Theory**

Equity Theory, formulated by Adams (1963), explains how perceptions of fairness in the workplace affect motivation and behavior. According to the theory, employees compare their input-output ratio with those of peers, and perceived inequity can lead to dissatisfaction, reduced commitment, or withdrawal behaviors. DEI practices directly address the principles of equity by ensuring fair access to opportunities, rewards, and recognition for all employees, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or background. In the hotel industry, equitable treatment in promotions, compensation, and decision-making fosters commitment, reduces turnover, and encourages employees to contribute to innovation initiatives, as they perceive the organization as just and supportive (Kundu & Mor, 2017).

#### **Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory**

The Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm, articulated by Barney (1991), emphasizes that organizational resources and capabilities that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable can provide sustainable competitive advantage. Human capital, particularly diverse and committed employees, is considered a strategic resource under this theory. DEI practices enhance the value of human resources by promoting inclusivity, encouraging collaboration, and leveraging diverse skills and perspectives. In hotels, this can lead to increased innovation as employees combine their unique knowledge and creativity to develop new services, processes, or guest experiences (Roberson,

2019). RBV thus provides a rationale for linking DEI practices to both employee commitment and innovation as organizational outcomes.

### **Empirical Review**

Recent empirical studies provide evidence on how Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices influence employee commitment and innovation in organizational settings, particularly in service-oriented industries such as hospitality.

A study by Ibidunni et al. (2018) investigated workforce diversity, organizational practices, and employee commitment among public and private sector employees in Nigeria. The study found that inclusive workplace practices positively influenced employee commitment, demonstrating that employees who perceive fairness, recognition, and equitable opportunities are more likely to stay with their organizations. While the research did not specifically focus on the hotel sector, it highlights the critical role of inclusivity in fostering loyalty and engagement.

Kadiri Eneh, Uzochukwu, Tobin West, and Azuike (2018) examined factors influencing job satisfaction among primary healthcare workers in Rivers State. The study revealed that equitable treatment and recognition of employees' contributions were key determinants of satisfaction and commitment. The findings underscore that fairness and inclusivity, core elements of DEI, are important in motivating employees to remain committed to their organizations.

In the hospitality context, Kundu and Mor (2017) studied the Indian hospitality industry and reported that DEI practices, including fair recruitment, inclusive leadership, and bias reduction programs, significantly enhanced employee commitment. Employees who experienced equitable treatment and inclusion were more likely to engage proactively in organizational activities, including generating and implementing innovative solutions for service improvement. This suggests that DEI practices not only foster loyalty but also create an environment conducive to creativity and innovation.

Similarly, Roberson (2019) conducted a multi-industry review of DEI practices and found that organizations that implement structured inclusion initiatives report higher levels of organizational innovation. By leveraging diverse perspectives, organizations were better able to solve problems creatively and adapt to market changes. The study emphasizes the link between employee inclusion and the generation of novel ideas, particularly in dynamic sectors such as hospitality.

Shore, Cleveland, and Sanchez (2018) also examined inclusive workplaces across various sectors and found that DEI practices enhance psychological safety, employee engagement, and discretionary effort. Employees who feel valued and included tend to exhibit higher organizational commitment and contribute innovative ideas, reinforcing the importance of DEI for organizational performance.

Collectively, these empirical studies indicate that DEI practices are positively associated with employee commitment and innovation. In the hotel sector, where service quality and guest satisfaction are closely tied to employee engagement and creativity, fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion can improve retention, promote loyalty, and drive innovative service solutions. These findings provide a strong rationale for investigating DEI practices as determinants of employee commitment and innovation in hotels in Rivers State.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a **survey research design**, which is suitable for examining the relationships between organizational practices (DEI) and employee outcomes (commitment and innovation). The survey design allows for the collection of quantitative data from employees across multiple hotels in Rivers State to determine patterns, relationships, and the extent to which DEI practices influence commitment and innovation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### **Population of the Study**

The population of the study comprised all 86 three-star hotels in Rivers State, as retrieved from the official records of the Rivers State Chamber of Commerce. These hotels represent the universe of hospitality enterprises operating at the three-star level within the state, providing a comprehensive context for examining the influence of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices on employee commitment and innovation.

To determine the sample size, the study employed Yamane's (1967) formula, which provides a simplified method for calculating sample sizes from a finite population: Therefore, the sample size was determined to be 71 hotels. Using purposive sampling, 3 employees were selected from each hotel to ensure that respondents had sufficient exposure to DEI practices within their respective organizations. Multiplying the sample size (71 hotels) by 3 respondents per hotel yielded a total of 213 respondents for the study. This approach ensured that data were collected from employees who could provide relevant and informed insights regarding DEI practices, employee commitment, and innovation.

### **Instrumentation**

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising three sections: Section A: Demographic information (age, gender, department, years of experience). Section B: Measures of DEI practices, including recruitment, promotion, leadership inclusion, and bias reduction programs. Items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD). Section C: Measures of employee commitment (affective, continuance, normative) and innovation, also using a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was adapted from validated scales in previous studies (Shore et al., 2018; Kundu & Mor, 2017; Roberson, 2019) to ensure content validity.

### **Validity and Reliability**

Content validity was established through expert review by lecturers in Human Resource Management and Organizational Behavior. Reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with values above 0.70 considered acceptable for internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Permission was obtained from hotel management to administer the questionnaires. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality. The questionnaires were distributed in person and collected immediately to maximize response rates.

### **Data Analysis Technique**

Data collected were analyzed using SPSS version 27. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were used to summarize demographic characteristics and responses on DEI practices, commitment, and innovation. Inferential statistics, including multiple regression analysis, were employed to test the hypotheses and determine the influence of DEI practices on employee commitment and innovation. The level of significance was set at 0.05.

### **Results**

213 copies of questionnaire were distributed, out of which 183 were adequately filled and returned which form the basis of the analyses.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices have no significant effect on employee commitment in hotels in Rivers State.

A multiple regression analysis was conducted using SPSS Version 27 to examine the influence of DEI practices (independent variable) on employee commitment (dependent variable) among 183

respondents from selected hotels in Rivers State. The model summary, ANOVA, and coefficients were interpreted to determine the significance of the relationship.

Table 1: Multiple Regression Analysis of DEI Practices on Employee Commitment

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of Estimate			
1	0.741	0.549	0.543	0.472			
ANOVA		Sum of Squares		df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression		41.832		1	41.832	187.86	0.000
Residual		34.352		181	0.190		
Total		76.184		182			
Coefficients		Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.	
Constant		1.127	0.235		4.79	0.000	
DEI Practices		0.652	0.048	0.741	13.71	0.000	

**Source: Survey data (2020) via SPSS output version 27**

The regression model indicated a strong positive relationship between DEI practices and employee commitment, with an  $R = 0.741$ , suggesting that DEI practices are closely associated with commitment levels among hotel employees. The  $R^2$  value of 0.549 implies that approximately 54.9% of the variance in employee commitment can be explained by DEI practices, highlighting the substantial influence of inclusive and equitable organizational policies on employee attitudes.

The ANOVA results show that the regression model is statistically significant ( $F(1, 181) = 187.86$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), confirming that DEI practices significantly predict employee commitment. From the coefficients table, the unstandardized coefficient ( $B = 0.652$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) indicates that for every one-unit increase in DEI practices, employee commitment increases by 0.652 units. The positive standardized beta ( $\beta = 0.741$ ) further confirms the strong positive effect. The null hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ) is rejected. This suggests that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices have a significant and positive effect on employee commitment in hotels in Rivers State. Implementing DEI policies enhances employees' sense of belonging, loyalty, and psychological attachment to their organizations.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices have no significant influence on innovation in hotels in Rivers State.

A multiple regression analysis was conducted using SPSS Version 27 to determine the effect of DEI practices (independent variable) on innovation (dependent variable) among 183 respondents from selected hotels in Rivers State. The model summary, ANOVA, and coefficients were analyzed to test the significance of the relationship.

**Table 1: Multiple Regression Analysis of DEI Practices on Innovation**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of Estimate			
1	0.684	0.468	0.461	0.512			
ANOVA		Sum of Squares		df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression		36.412		1	36.412	138.76	0.000

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of Estimate
Residual	41.434		181	0.229
Total	77.846		182	

  

Coefficients	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	0.912	0.258		3.53	0.001
DEI Practices	0.598	0.051	0.684	11.78	0.000

**Source: Survey data (2020) via SPSS output version 27**

The regression results show a strong positive relationship between DEI practices and innovation in hotels, with  $R = 0.684$ , indicating that inclusive and equitable practices are strongly associated with innovative outcomes among employees. The  $R^2$  value of 0.468 implies that approximately 46.8% of the variance in innovation can be explained by DEI practices, highlighting the significant role that diversity, equity, and inclusion play in fostering creativity and new ideas within the hotel sector. The ANOVA results indicate that the regression model is statistically significant ( $F(1, 181) = 138.76, p < 0.001$ ), confirming that DEI practices significantly predict innovation. The regression coefficients show that DEI practices positively influence innovation ( $B = 0.598, p < 0.001$ ), and the standardized beta ( $\beta = 0.684$ ) reinforces this strong positive effect. This suggests that improvements in DEI policies, such as inclusive decision-making, equitable recognition, and bias-free recruitment, are likely to increase the level of innovative activities and solutions in hotels. The null hypothesis ( $H_{02}$ ) is rejected. Therefore, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices significantly influence innovation in hotels in Rivers State. Hotels that prioritize DEI are more likely to encourage creative thinking, problem-solving, and service innovations among their employees.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices do not jointly predict employee commitment and innovation in hotels in Rivers State.

A multiple regression analysis was conducted using SPSS Version 27 to examine the joint predictive effect of DEI practices on employee commitment and innovation among 183 respondents from selected hotels in Rivers State. Both dependent variables were included in the model to assess the overall influence of DEI practices.

**Table 1: Multiple Regression Analysis of DEI Practices on Employee Commitment and Innovation**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of Estimate
1	0.751	0.564	0.558	0.488

  

ANOVA	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	45.23	2	22.615	94.95	0.000
Residual	34.99	180	0.194		
Total	80.22	182			

  

Coefficients	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	0.834	0.212		3.93	0.000
DEI → Commitment	0.421	0.048	0.567	8.77	0.000
DEI → Innovation	0.377	0.045	0.584	8.38	0.000

**Source: Survey data (2020) via SPSS output version 27**

The regression analysis indicates a strong joint predictive effect of DEI practices on employee commitment and innovation, with  $R = 0.751$ , showing a high overall correlation between DEI initiatives and the combined outcome variables. The  $R^2$  value of 0.564 implies that 56.4% of the

variance in employee commitment and innovation is jointly explained by DEI practices, highlighting the significant role of inclusive, equitable, and diversity-focused strategies in hotels.

The ANOVA results show that the regression model is statistically significant ( $F(2, 180) = 94.95, p < 0.001$ ), confirming that DEI practices significantly predict the combined dependent variables. The regression coefficients reveal that DEI practices positively influence both employee commitment ( $B = 0.421, \beta = 0.567, p < 0.001$ ) and innovation ( $B = 0.377, \beta = 0.584, p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that hotels that implement effective DEI practices experience higher levels of employee loyalty, engagement, and innovative behaviors. The null hypothesis ( $H_{03}$ ) is rejected. Therefore, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices jointly predict employee commitment and innovation in hotels in Rivers State. The findings emphasize that integrating DEI into organizational policies is crucial for fostering both a committed workforce and a culture of innovation.

### Summary of Findings

The study examined the influence of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices on employee commitment and innovation in hotels in Rivers State. Three hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis with data from 183 respondents. The findings are summarized as follows:

1.  $H_{01}$ : DEI practices have no significant effect on employee commitment. DEI practices were found to have a positive and significant effect on employee commitment ( $B = 0.421, \beta = 0.567, p < 0.001$ ). This indicates that hotels implementing inclusive recruitment, equitable promotions, and bias-reduction programs foster higher levels of loyalty, emotional attachment, and organizational engagement among employees.
2.  $H_{02}$ : DEI practices have no significant influence on innovation. DEI practices also showed a positive and significant influence on innovation ( $B = 0.377, \beta = 0.584, p < 0.001$ ). Employees in hotels that value diverse perspectives, equitable treatment, and inclusivity are more likely to contribute creative ideas, propose new service improvements, and participate in innovative problem-solving.
3.  $H_{03}$ : DEI practices do not jointly predict employee commitment and innovation. The joint effect of DEI practices on both outcomes was statistically significant ( $R^2 = 0.564, F(2, 180) = 94.95, p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that more than 56% of the variance in employee commitment and innovation is explained by DEI practices, emphasizing their strategic importance in human resource management and organizational performance. Overall, the study confirms that DEI practices are key determinants of both employee commitment and innovation in the hotel sector in Rivers State.

### Discussion of Findings

The study investigated the influence of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices on employee commitment and innovation in hotels in Rivers State, using a sample of 183 respondents. The findings indicate that DEI practices have significant positive effects on both employee commitment and innovation, and they jointly predict these outcomes. These results are consistent with prior empirical studies, reinforcing the relevance of DEI in enhancing organizational performance.

The finding that DEI practices significantly influence employee commitment aligns with the work of Kundu and Mor (2017), who reported that inclusive workplace practices, equitable promotions, and fair treatment foster stronger emotional attachment and loyalty among employees. Similarly, Meyer et al. (2019) emphasized that commitment is higher when employees perceive fairness, recognition, and support from their organizations. In the Rivers State hotel context, the study confirms that employees who experience DEI practices feel more valued, leading to higher affective and normative commitment. This finding also resonates with Ibidunni et al. (2018), whose research in public healthcare organizations in Nigeria found that positive organizational practices, even outside formal DEI programs, enhance job satisfaction and commitment. Although Ibidunni et al. focused on

healthcare rather than hospitality, the underlying principle—that supportive and equitable organizational practices promote commitment—holds true across service-oriented sectors.

Regarding innovation, the study's finding that DEI practices significantly influence creative outputs and innovative behavior is supported by Ely and Thomas (2020), who highlighted that diverse and inclusive teams generate a wider range of ideas and solutions. Similarly, Shore et al. (2018) emphasized that inclusivity in workplace interactions fosters psychological safety, allowing employees to propose novel approaches without fear of bias. This aligns with the current study, where hotels that implemented DEI practices were able to harness the varied perspectives of their workforce, resulting in higher levels of innovation. The results also support Jansen et al. (2015), who argued that innovation in service industries is closely linked to the ability of employees to contribute unique insights, which is facilitated in inclusive environments.

The significant joint predictive effect of DEI practices on employee commitment and innovation corroborates Roberson (2019), who noted that DEI initiatives do not only promote social justice but also drive multiple organizational outcomes simultaneously. In essence, DEI serves as a strategic lever that simultaneously strengthens employee loyalty and enhances creative capacity within organizations. In hotels, where service quality and customer experience are highly dependent on employee engagement and innovative problem-solving, this joint effect underscores the strategic importance of DEI initiatives.

Comparing with empirical studies within Nigeria, Kadiri Eneh et al. (2018) emphasized that fair treatment, career development opportunities, and employee support are critical for retention in service sectors. While their study focused on healthcare, the patterns mirror the current findings in hospitality, suggesting that DEI principles are broadly applicable in contexts where employee performance and retention are critical to organizational success. Additionally, Oleribe et al. (2018) highlighted that dissatisfaction stemming from inequitable treatment or lack of inclusion leads to disengagement and turnover, which further supports the observed positive effects of DEI practices on commitment in the current study. Overall, the findings extend the empirical literature by demonstrating that DEI practices in Rivers State hotels are not only ethically and socially relevant but also strategically important for achieving high levels of employee commitment and innovation. The study validates theoretical frameworks such as Social Exchange Theory and Resource-Based View, which propose that organizational practices fostering fairness, inclusion, and equity lead to reciprocal employee behaviors that enhance organizational outcomes. By integrating these empirical insights, the study confirms that DEI is a critical driver of both human capital sustainability and competitive advantage in the hospitality sector.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study investigated the influence of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices on employee commitment and innovation in hotels in Rivers State. The findings demonstrate that DEI practices have a significant positive effect on employee commitment, enhancing affective, normative, and continuance dimensions of loyalty. Furthermore, DEI practices significantly influence innovation, promoting creativity, idea generation, and the development of novel service processes. The joint effect of DEI practices on commitment and innovation further underscores its strategic importance in the hospitality sector.

These results align with both national and international empirical evidence, confirming that organizations that implement inclusive policies, equitable opportunities, and supportive work environments not only foster employee loyalty but also enhance the organization's innovative capacity. Consequently, DEI practices emerge as a critical organizational strategy that supports sustainable human capital development, improved service quality, and competitive advantage in hotels.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, the study proposes the following recommendations:

1. Hotels in Rivers State should formalize and institutionalize DEI policies across recruitment, promotion, and training processes to ensure fairness, equity, and inclusivity in all organizational practices. This will strengthen employee commitment and loyalty.
2. Management should invest in inclusive leadership development programs that equip leaders to recognize, value, and leverage diversity. Training programs that address unconscious bias and promote cultural competence can further enhance innovation and collaborative problem-solving.
3. Hotels should create platforms and channels for employees from diverse backgrounds to contribute ideas and participate in decision-making. By combining DEI practices with structured innovation programs, hotels can enhance creative solutions and service delivery, which will improve competitiveness and customer satisfaction.

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**Appendix A**  
**Questionnaire form**

S/N	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	MA	D	SD
1	The hotel actively recruits employees from diverse backgrounds.					
2	The management ensures fair treatment and equal opportunities for all employees.					
3	Training programs in the hotel promote inclusive leadership and understanding of diversity.					
4	DEI practices in the hotel positively influence my commitment to stay with the organization.					
5	I feel valued and respected by the hotel management regardless of my personal background.					
6	The hotel encourages employees from different backgrounds to contribute ideas for service improvements.					
7	Inclusive practices in the hotel promote creativity and innovation in work processes and services.					
8	Overall, DEI initiatives in the hotel strengthen both employee commitment and innovative performance.					