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Barriers to Women Participation in Management

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Abstract

A major argument often put forward by critics of women's role in management is that women's work behaviour is a function of the negative stereotypes attached to them, which have hitherto been stumbling block to the top positions in management. In the face of the recent gradual re-engineering and globalisation that gives room for speed, flexibility, efficiency and the employment of relevant managerial skills (irrespective of the sex of the individual) in the work place, it may be necessary to measure the degree to which those stumbling blocks or barriers to women participation in management asserted by some scholars still apply to the present day management situation. It is the basic objective of this paper therefore, to confirm if these barriers (or some of them) are indeed, still inhibitive or are no more applicable, by investigating the personal opinions of top company managers with respect to those barriers. To do this study was conducted on a set of purposively sampled top managers spread equally across both private and public organisations in Lagos State, and the findings disagreed with six (6) of the nine (9) major barriers identified. The oral interviews conducted pointed in the same direction. It was also discovered that women are still not well represented in the private sector management when compared to the public sector. Using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), the study confirmed that women are good enough as men in managerial positions; women generally do not have low level aspiration for managerial positions; and that men do not tend to adopt a better leadership style when compared to women.

Introduction

A 1997 United Nations report asserted that women remain an under-utilised human resource world wide. (Anker, 1997). The under-utilisation of women capabilities is often linked to economic political/legal systems and cultural factors. (Oyekanmi, 2004; Olojede, 2004; Anifowose, 2004; Owen and Todor, (1993) These three factors interact and influence the ways different countries allocate labour, wealth and power, which in most instances favour men (Harris, 1999; Fagenson-Eland and Parker, 1998).

Several scholars have conducted studies on women's participation in the formal sector of the economy and they all attest to the fact that not only is women's participation in the formal sector low, women are being discriminated against in occupational (which could be horizontal segregation, that is, women being engaged in low paying and low status jobs; or vertical segregation, that women occupy non-strategic positions in the workplace)(Anker, 1997). Women seldom reach top level positions in organisations and they do not appear to move up the hierarchy as rapidly as their male counterparts.(Droste,2002). Wage differences in male and female managerial jobs stem from the fact that even when women hold managerial jobs, they are often in less strategic, lower paying areas of a company's operations. According to Onyeonuru (2005),women hold a mere 1 to 3 percent of top jobs in the biggest corporations around the world. A level of progress was made in the United States in 1999 with women occupying 5.1 percent of executive management positions in the 500 largest companies compared with 2.4 percent in 1996. For women who experience race discrimination, the barrier to top jobs seems to be unbreakable. In Nigeria, the national female labour force participation rate is 45. 1%.but the participation rates vary between states. In Lagos and Oyo states for example, the rates of participation are 5 1.35% and 63.85% respectively but they are more likely to be found in lower level occupations. (FOS,1983;Ola-Aluko,2003). Also, in spite of the rapid influx of women into the managerial and administrative categories, few female professionals have reached the top cadre of corporate management because the glass ceiling is still much in force. (Olowe, 2002).

Focus of the Study

The issue of women in management is an old and well-researched topic. Nonetheless, it remains very much a source of continuing concern and controversy among academics and organisational experts in view of the fact that despite many changes (for example, people becoming better educated and technological advancement), the age-old myth about women's and men's capabilities remain largely unchanged. Scholars have identified barriers to women's participation in management, and these have been grouped into nine (9) sub-modules for the purpose of this study. These major barriers are women are not good enough as managers when compared to men; that there are glass ceilings barring women from getting to top management posts; that women are not as physically strong as men; women have low level of aspiration for managerial positions; that the men have forged a strong network edging women out of opportunities; that women are less competent when compared to men; that women have fewer opportunities for training and development in the workplace; that the men tend to adopt a better leadership style when compared to women; and that there is organizational discrimination in terms of sex when it comes to policy formulation and implementation. The negative stereotypes may be true for many women in the workforce, but it may be necessary to enquire whether those stereotypes accurately describe women who have made the decision to pursue a managerial career. (Owen and Todor, 1993).

The basic objectives of this study are to ascertain if the pre-conceived barriers to women participation in management pointed out by scholars are still obtainable in the present -day management in Lagos state and subsequently establish if men and women differ in terms of managerial capability; find out if women generally have low levels of aspiration for managerial positions; and finally to confirm if the male manager adopts a better leadership style, when compared to the female manager. An insight into the recommendations of this study will not only energise women in managerial positions to channel their energy in the expected direction, but will provide solutions to the barriers that have hitherto created a 'brick wall' to their elevation to managerial peaks.

Conceptual Issues

Women are underrepresented in management positions in comparison to men all over the world. (Tai, Sims and Randi, 2005). Female managers, who hitherto were called “women managers”, are faced with strongly held negative stereotypes distinguishing them from their male counterparts in the workplace. Owen and Todor (1993) observed the tendency to describe female managers as less self—confident, less emotionally stable, less analytical, less consistent and having poorer leadership abilities than male managers. Some assumptions typical of negative stereotypes attributed to female managers include:

Women tend to place family demands above work considerations. They have children to cater for; thus they have less time for, and interest in, their jobs.

Women work for supplemental income; they lack the necessary drive to succeed in business.

Women take negative feedback personally rather than professionally. They may run from the room in tears if criticised.

Women are unsuitable for top management position because they are too emotional and lack aggressiveness.

Based on the above assumptions, scholars have identified some barriers. which can be grouped into nine: women-not-good-enough ideology (Chow 1995); glass ceiling perspective (Harris,1999; Fagenson-Eland and Parker,1998; JBEC,2002); negative stereotypical assumptions.(Anker, 1997; Gibson, Jvancevich and Donnelly, 1997).; low levels of aspiration (Horner,1972; Ragins and Sundstrom,1989); formal and informal network forged by men (Fagenson-Eland and Parker,1998; Coe,1992); attributions for successful work performance (Rosenthal,1995; Cooper and David, 1992; Thompson, 1997); lower training and development opportunities (Anker, 1997; Woodall, Edwards and Welchaman,1995; Beck and Steel,1998), leadership behaviour (Ola Aluko,2003; D’Ambrosio,2000; Fagenson-Eland and Parker, 1998; Hannagan,2005) and impact of organisational systems (Harris, 1999; Adler,1993 and Kanter,1997).

Theoretical Assumptions

There is no consensus based on empirical evidence, as to the work behaviour women exhibit in organisations. (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmit, 1998; Engen and Willemsen, 2001). The perspectives often employed to explain this, among others, are the gender-centred perspective, organisational structure perspective and gender-organisation-system perspective. (Fagenson-eland and Parker, 1998).

The fundamental argument of the gender-centred perspective is that, gender is a major determinant of an individual's preferences, abilities, skills, and, behaviours. Since men are stereotypically assumed to be more competent relative to women, they (men) are mostly considered for senior level positions. A related approach to the gender-centred perspective is the complementary contributions approach which argues that even though men and women are different, each make valuable contributions to the organisation. organisational promotion, policy formulation and implementation, nature of work and type of industry).

The gender-organisation-system perspective supports the other two approaches but goes further to say that individual and organizations can be adequately understood only in relation to the societal norms and values in which they operate. This implies that workplace experiences of women Cannot be divorced from prevailing sex stereotypes in the society. This theory can be used to argue that opportunities for women in the business world result not from a single stand-alone event, but rather from complex interactions and convergence among multiple forces, including political and legal activities, societal beliefs, values, practices, and, organisational and individual actions.

Furthermore, Anker (1997) cited the gender theory as a valuable contribution towards explaining occupational segregation by sex showing how closely the characteristics of female occupations in mirror the common stereotypes of women and their supposed abilities and behaviour in the workplace. The following 'positive', 'negative' and 'others' stereotypes were identified. The gender theory uses family interests and personal qualities to explain female work behaviour (Riger and Galligan, 1980; Fagenson, 1986), but it ignores the type of and working conditions (Aina,1998). Again, it fails to consider the situational variables in the

workplace, such as nature of product service, organisational policy formulation and implementation, type of industry, etc.

Research Design

This research is descriptive in nature, and it is based on population characteristics and representative sample of the population (Asika,2004).It is pre-planned and structured, adopting the various methods of a descriptive research design in data gathering, which include mail questionnaire, observation, personal interview and information technology (especially, on-line downloads).

The sampling technique adopted was purposive because tile study was targeted strictly at topmost managers, that is, those on top of the organisational hierarchy and who were involved directly in decision making in the selected organizations. This goes in line with the characteristic nature of purposive or judgmental sampling technique, where the selection of subjects by researcher is based on his belief or presumption that tile issue of discourse is typical to tile population to be studied (Araoye, 2003).

The populations of top managers in the selected public and private organisations in Lagos state were one hundred (100) and thirty-four (34) respectively. From these, a total sample of forty eight (48) was drawn as respondents to the questionnaire (See Appendix A) designed to investigate their personal opinions on some stated barriers to women participation in management. There was an attempt at an q.ual gender representation in the sample of study, but that was only achievable with the public sector managers as relatively few women were found in managerial positions in the .elected private companies. The sample comprises twenty four (24) top managers read across six (6) private organisations, and twenty four (24) individuals in top managerial positions spread across twelve (12) ministries of the public service in Lagos State. Lagos is chosen as the study area because it is the commercial nerve-centre of Nigeria where a significant number of managerial and administrative duties take place. Also, the selected private organisations in Lagos were national headquarters of their companies.

Table 1: Population and Sample of Top managers of selected private Organizations used for the study

<i>Private Organizations</i>	Population			Sample		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Mobil Nig. Ltd. Lagos	5	2	7	2	2	4
First Funds Ltd. Lagos	3	2	5	2	2	4
Even-Ezra Nig. Ltd. Lagos	4	2	6	2	2	4
Medallion Communications Ltd. Lagos	4	-	4	4	-	4
West Africa Milk Company, Plc. Lagos	5	1	6	3	1	4
OASIS Insurance Plc. Lagos	4	2	6	3	1	4
Total	25	9	34	16	8	24

Tables 2: Population and Sample of Top managers of Selected Private Organisations used for the study

<i>Public Organizations</i>	Population			Sample		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Public Service Office	5	4	9	1	1	2
Min. of Youth, Sport & Soc. Dev.	4	6	10	1	1	2
Min. of Women Affairs & Poverty Alleviation, Lagos State	3	6	9	1	1	2
Ministry of Works, Lagos State	6	4	10	1	1	2
Ministry of Justice, Lagos State	5	5	10	1	1	2
Ministry of Education, Lagos	6	5	11	1	1	2
Ministry of Finance, Lagos	4	3	7	1	1	2
Ministry of Establishment, Training & Job Creation	4	4	8	1	1	2
Lagos Television/LSBC	3	3	6	1	1	2
Governor's Office	2	1	3	1	1	2
Lands Bureau	5	5	10	1	1	2
Ministry of the Environment	4	3	7	1	1	2
Total	51	49	100	12	12	24

Analysis of Respondents' Reactions

The structure and nature of this research work took into consideration, nine research Sub-systems to explain the predictive capacity of these elements: which are

- a) Explanation of whether women are good enough as managers when Compared with their men counterparts.
- b) Time measure of women on the managerial scene.
- c) Determination of women's physical ability when compared to men.
- d) Determination of the aspiration levels of women towards managerial positions
- e) A confirmation of whether women are being edged out of opportunities by the networks constituted by the men.
- f) Determination of women's degree of managerial competence when compared to men.
- g) Explanation of whether women have less opportunities for training and development.
- h) Determination of which of the sexes (that is, male and female managers) adopt a better leadership style. and,
- i) Explanations on whether companies tend to be discriminatory in terms of sex when it comes to policy formulation and implementation.

Table 3: Response to main enquiries

a-i	SD F(%)	D F(%)	U F(%)	A F(%)	SA F(%)	Total(%)
a	33(68.8)	12(25)	3(6.3)	0(0)	0(0)	48(100)
b	26(54.2)	15(31.3)	7(14.6)	0(0)	0(0)	48(100)
c	23(47.9)	16(33.3)	5(10.4)	4(8.3)	0(0)	48(100)
d	25(52.1)	20(41.7)	3(6.3)	0(0)	0(0)	48(100)
e	10(20.8)	15(31.3)	6(12.5)	12(25)	5(10.4)	48(100)
f	23(47.9)	20(41.7)	2(4.2)	3(6.3)	0(0)	48(100)
g	10(20.8)	17(35.4)	4(8.3)	13(27.1)	4(8.3)	48(100)
h	20(41.7)	20(41.7)	2(4.2)	6(12.5)	0(0)	48(100)
i	12(25)	7(14.6)	5(10.4)	12(25)	12(25)	48(100)

B. Bio-data of Respondents

Age Distribution

Going by the bio-data of the 48 respondents, with ages ranging between 6 years and 6 + years, on Tables 10, 11(22.92%) and 13 (27.19) had their ages between 31 —35 years and 36 — 40 years intervals respectively. 8 ((16.7%).of the respondents fell : 41 — 45 years, while the same number goes for respondents aged 46 and above. 6(12.5%) of the respondents did not indicate their ages but were all perceived as adults by researcher.

Sex Distribution: 28 (58.33%) of the 48 respondents were males, while the remaining 20 (41.67%) were females.

Length of Years of Respondents as Staff in the Organisation: 14 (29.2%) and 12 (25%) of the 48 respondents had worked as staff of their various companies. within 1- 5 years and 6 - 10 years intervals respectively. 8 (16.7%) had spent between 11 and 15 years, while another 8 (16.7%) had spent between 16 to 20 years. 5 (10.42%) of the respondents had spent 21 years or more, as staff of their various organisations. 1 (2.1%) respondent however left this enquiry blank. It was also observed that those who had worked between 16 years and above were majorly staff of the selected public organisations.

Length of Years of Respondents as Managers: Exactly 24(50%), which form half of the respondents had worked as managers in their various organisations for more than 5 year; while 19(39.58%) and 5(10.42%) of the 48 respondents had spent 1 -5 years interval and below one year respectively.

Marital Status of Respondents 33 (68.8%) and 12 (25%) were married and single respectively, while 3 (6.3%) of the 48 respondents left this enquiry blank.

Academic Qualifications of Respondents In terms of education, 25 (52.08%) respondents possess Postgraduate (Masters/PGD) degree, while 15 (31.25%) of the total 48 respondents already had Bachelor's degrees. 6 (12.5%) respondents had. Higher Diplomas. Only 2 (4.17%) of the total number of respondents live basically on their professional Certificates (JCSA and ICAN).

Other Barriers Identified by Respondents: In table 4 below, only 5 (10.42%) minority of the 48 respondents thought of other barriers to women participation in management as: Inability of women to face challenges; women's lack of command

prowess; less aggression on the part of women and; women's concern for family issues.

Barriers	Frequency	Percentage%
- Nil	43	89.6
- Inability to face Challenges	1	2.08
- No Command Prowess	1	2.08
- Less aggressive	2	4.17
- Family Issues		
Total	48	100%

Core Enquiries: A very significant number of the respondents disagree with statements 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 8 with at least 40 (83.33%) of them either on the “Strongly Disagree” or “Disagree” categories of response. Between 2 (4.17%) and 7 (14.58%) were undecided in response to all the nine (9) major statements under test.

Responses to Oral Interview Questions.

AU the responses to the oral interview questions were basically on the same trend with that of the structured questionnaire. Only one (1) female could not be reached for oral interview.

Test of Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested, using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical tool.

Hypothesis 1:

Ho: Women are good enough as managers when compared to men.

Hi: Women are not good enough as managers when compared to men.

F calculated = 0.255 (See Appendix C) and F1 tabulated 2.84 at 0.05(alpha) and F2 tabulated = 4.31 at 0.01 (alpha) (See Appendix E). Thus, F tab. > F cal, If the critical value of F at 0.05 (alpha), is greater than (>) the F-ratio calculated, we accept Ho and Reject Hi. But if otherwise, we reject Ho and accept H But here, F

tab> F cal. We accept Ho and reject Hi. Therefore, Women are good enough as managers when compared to Men.

H 2

Ho: Women generally have lower levels of aspiration than men.

Hi : Women generally do not have lower levels of aspiration than men.

F cal = 20.456, F1 tab = 3.23 at 0.05(alpha) and F2 tab 5.18 at 0.01(alpha).

Here, Flab < Fcal. We reject Ho and Accept Hi. Therefore, women generally do not have low levels of aspiration when compared to men.

Hypothesis 3

Ho: Men tend to adopt a better leadership style than women.

Hi: Men do not tend to adopt a better leadership style than Women.

Fcal = 3.356, F1 tab = 3.23 at 0.05(alpha) and F2 tab = 5.18 at 0

Here, Ftab < Fcal . We reject Ho and Accept Hi. Therefore, men do not tend to adopt a better leadership style than women.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the above interpretation of findings, and the test of the hypotheses, the respondents disagreed with six(6) out of the nine(9) pre-conceived barriers to the participation of women in management, which state that women are not good enough as managers when compared to men; women have not been in the organisations long enough to reach the managerial levels, women are physically disadvantaged than men; v generally have low levels of aspiration for managerial positions: women are attributed to be less competent when compared to men, and that men tend to adopt a better leadership style when compared to women.

The findings above go in line with the studies of Donnell and Hall(1980) and Hannagan (2005) which assert that women too can be as effective as men when they become managers, and that both sexes are equally effective as leaders. Secondly, in the course of sampling, it was discovered that women are still not well represented in the private sector management when compared to the public sector.

The following antidotes are being recommended to tackle the barriers to women participation in management:

- Definition of a successful career path planning and development;
- Neglect of the existence of competition between the two (2) sexes;
- Establishment of “women’s club” that would enable them to break down the barriers in male dominated establishments. Nicolson (1996) stated that ‘women’ need other ‘women’ and thus have to support each other. This will frustrate the male view forwarded by Wolf (1994) that ‘women cannot work together’.
- Setting of targets and meeting them.
- Attribution of success to hardwork.
- Mentoring, by ensuring a female successor into a role previously occupied by a female.
- Exploration of other areas untackled by men that will enable them to be seen as “inventors”.
- Minimisation of role conflicts between home, as wives! mothers, and office, as managers at work. Sandi Man (1995) suggested how women can overcome the impediments to the position of power in organisations these include overcoming negative socialisation process, by asserting their rights, changing the stereotyped image of women as self depreciating ephicacing, and recognizing the value of politics as a powerful force in organisations, As for Growe and Montgomery (2000) they suggested that women in leadership positions or those seeking leadership positions must acquire skills to survive in the workplace, such as taking time to plan for a successful career, development of confidence, cultivating the idea of delegating work effectively, meeting deadlines and the development of managerial roles.

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