

Underrepresentation of women in managerial position sociology essay

[Profession](#), [Manager](#)



From the mid 1970s across countries all over the world, particularly in developed countries such as United States; women began to work in management jobs such as secretarial and clerical jobs in considerable significant numbers. Following this, there have been different researches that have emerged to examine how women are developing and progressing in managerial positions particularly positions that involve women in management within the workplace (Powell and Butterfield, 1994).

Nigeria is known as the most populous country in West Africa with an estimated population of 140 million and the percentage of women is about 57 percent of the total population, yet the involvement of women in socio-political matters especially when it relates to such positions as managers where women will have to take part in major decision making roles is limited. This is as a result of gender issues within Nigeria's society because differences exist in the way men and women are treated (Anakwe, 2002).

Madiche (2009), argued that even though a significant number of women have changed occupations from traditional female occupations such as teaching and nursing to male dominated occupations such as engineering and banking, unfortunately, women are still underrepresented in managerial positions, because of unequal career advancement opportunities that hinders them from attaining managerial positions.

Nigeria is still a developing society where men are more highly valued than women, they dominate positions of authority more than women and it is a patriarchal society, where the cultural and social activities of women are governed by men and which favours the interest of men over that of women.

The attitudes of the society about women accessing managerial position are being constrained by the gender roles of men and women (NGP, 2007). The Nigerian Civil Service is the largest employer in Nigeria and according to research, 76 percent of workers in the civil service constitute men while the remaining 24 percent are made up of women. Even though women are assigned to some managerial positions such as permanent secretaries, women still hold less than 14 percent of total managerial positions in the Nigerian civil service (CIDA Nigeria, GSAA, 2006).

Recent research by Okarfor et al., (2011), discovers that American women in significant numbers have not reached the heights of their careers, even though they are actively involved in managerial positions. Also in United Kingdom, in instances where women make up about 40 percent of total labour force, 26 percent of women are said to be in managerial type jobs, regardless of the fact that both men and women have opportunities to successfully be leaders, there exist barriers which hinder women from reaching top managerial positions.

This research study is centred on the experiences of women within the Nigeria Civil Service using Nigeria Ports Authority which is one of the many organizations of the Federal Government of Nigeria. Following the introduction, the statement of the problem and research questions was discussed. Relevant literatures on barriers that hinder women from advancing in their career were discussed to review the study. In-depth interview was the method adopted to carry out the research, which was

followed by analyses of the data, summary of findings, recommendation and conclusion.

1. 2 Statement of the Problem and Research Question

Managerial and professional positions are attached to a great deal of authority, respect and recognition. Those in this position are usually rewarded with high level of economic pay. However, the underrepresentation of women in management at the workplace is a fact which is known within Nigeria society. Studies reveal that over the last years, there has been an increase in the number of female managers across different organizations within the world, restructuring managerial positions from men toward women. Even at this, there are still issues surrounding women's advancement in their careers especially to managerial positions (Ismail, 2008).

In Nigeria, gender socializations is generating social discrimination against women within formal and informal work environment, men are seen as most appropriate for managerial positions. Women lack the skills and abilities that would make an efficient manager when compared to their male colleagues who are said to be fit for such positions. The entry of women into higher positions of authority in a society like Nigeria has resulted into stereotypes which have been questioned (Omaji, 1993; Kamoche, 1997).

The experiences of women in management in Nigerian civil service are peculiar social and cultural characteristics subjecting women to be under the authority of men within the society, not only experienced by women in the

civil service but also women in the Nigerian society. Thus it is important to examine the factors that encourage or discourage women from advancing to managerial positions in the Nigerian civil service. Therefore, the central research question is: Why are women noticeably underrepresented in managerial positions in the Nigerian Civil Service? This can be further broken down into:

How has gender inequality contributed to the underrepresentation of women in managerial position within Nigeria's civil service?

Do family responsibilities have an effect on the underrepresentation of women in managerial position in the civil service?

How can women be more represented in Managerial positions within the Nigeria Civil Service?

1. 3 Objectives of the Study

This study will examine the effect of gender inequalities on the underrepresentation of women in Nigeria's civil service, its objectives are as follows;

To examine how gender inequality has contributed to the underrepresentation of women in Nigerian civil service

To examine the effect of family responsibilities on the underrepresentation of women in Nigerian civil service

To examine the ways in which women can be further represented in managerial positions in Nigerian civil service

1. 4 Significance of the Study

This study is about the underrepresentation of women in top managerial position within the Nigerian civil service. The rationale for the study is as a result of assumptions and practices within the Nigerian society that men are superior to women leading to inequalities in the society. The study will show how the role of patriarchy within the Nigerian working system has brought about women subordination, discrimination and gender inequalities.

The result of the study will help to formulate effective strategies that will address the underrepresentation of women in Nigerian civil service, additionally; it will contribute to existing literatures on the importance of women in management in Nigeria and Africa at large.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2. 1 Introduction

This chapter is a review of related literatures on studies in the past surrounding the underrepresentation of women in top management positions. Past empirical studies have identified various barriers that hinder women from advancing in their careers within the Nigerian civil service. These barriers were discussed further in details in this section.

2. 2 Gender Socialization; Historical Perspective of Nigerian Society

Society differentiates and predetermines human development in its entirety especially its members roles and responsibilities be it female or male, the execution of these roles are constructed socially via the socialization process (Onyeonoru, 2005).

Gender roles are distinct in Nigeria; the male child is given more priority in terms of education than the female child. When a female child is born into the society, her opportunities and possibilities are limited by societal cultures and norms notwithstanding the kind of attributes that is being displayed by the girl (Abiola, 2004; Nwezeh, 2009).

The male child in Nigeria is favoured by customs and traditions, which are culturally instilled in them since birth. They are groomed to take up positions of authority from their fathers while the female child is trained to be a home maker and submissive to men. In the past, educating the female child was considered a total waste as she would eventually be married and would be a “property” of her husband. To this effect the female child in Nigeria was not sent to school. With civilization and enlightenment in the nineteenth century, the female child is now reluctantly being sent to school. Even with this, male education was getting more priority than the female in most Nigerian families, although financial constraints did not help the plight to educate the female child. As a result of this, the opportunities for women to compete adequately with men did not exist in the Nigerian society, it was considered an aberration for women to contend with men for positions of authority and

women who were qualified to be in managerial positions shy away from it so as not to incur societal wrath, they remained comfortable in lesser positions; apparently disadvantaged and without skills due to lack of education, they are left with less challenging work within the Nigerian society (White et al., 1992; Mathur-Helm, 2005; Olojede, 2009).

The pre-industrial economy in Africa was characterized by family economy, where husbands and fathers were served and were seen as the head and superior. During that time, work for women was mostly limited to their household chores, which also includes taking care of their husband, children, siblings and homes (Tilly and Scott, 1978, cited in Erickson, 1992). Those women who were considered rebellious wanted to work but they were limited by various factors. One of them was location, whether women lived in rural or urban areas determined the type of job they could get; other factors include their social class, age and marital status. Women from wealthy families usually did not work but managed their homes; on the other hand women from medium income families were required to contribute to the family income by assisting their husbands in the running of their farm or other businesses (Sharpe, 1998). Single women were involved in various trades at that time, some of them were found in male dominated trades such as blacksmithing but very few of them were seen in these trades. They were mostly found in female dominated trades such as buying and selling of goods or farm produce (Sharpe, 1998).

In the twentieth century, as Nigeria developed as a country, women were involved in a range of occupations outside their homes, many of which could

be considered as managerial, although they were not regarded as managerial, rather as secretarial or administrative positions (Kiamba, 2008). They worked with their husbands or fathers in managing the family business but were regarded as subordinates; their managerial roles were concealed under their father or husband's work (Powell 1993). Managerial positions were ascribed to men because managers who occupy those positions were seen as strong, authoritative and assertive. For a woman to occupy a managerial position meant that the belief of men being in leadership roles has been dishonoured, especially if the role involves overseeing the duties of men (Fagenson, 1993). It is important to acknowledge that since the beginning of civilization, women around the world including Nigeria have suffered various forms of inhumane treatment, which includes but not limited to oppression, subjugation, violence and degradation (Abiola, 2004; Nwezeh, 2009).

Omotola (2007) and Mathur-helm, (2005), opined that women are regarded as the weaker sex and due to this they are usually oppressed, violated, discriminated against and alienated in different forms which include socio-cultural, religious and economic beliefs. Fadeke et al., (2010), argued further that these cultural beliefs women are faced with are a reflection of the society and it begins from childhood when girls are socialized in particular traditional roles and prohibited from involving themselves with certain roles that are attributed to males. This socialization process eventually results in prejudice and glass ceiling which affects women later in their life when

building their careers and thus hinder them from such positions as managers, directors, executives and so on (Fadeke et al., 2010)

A research by Fadeke et al., (2010), proved that the advancement of women into managerial positions is slower than that of men which has been attributed to a “purgatory effect” which is a condition that has limited women from attaining managerial positions which is evident in Nigeria. Fadeke et al., (2010), argued that Nigeria’s corporate world is dominated by men and women who want to ascend to top management positions have to break down the glass ceiling which in fact is difficult to break through. When they eventually break this mold and attain these managerial positions, they are discriminated against, marginalized and they are seen as just filling up the position not because they have the ability required for contributing positively when they attain such positions (Fadeke et al., 2010).

2. 3 Barriers to Underrepresentation of Women in Managerial Positions

2. 3. 1 Glass Ceiling and Gender Discrimination

“The lack of women in the workplace in senior managerial positions is recognized as a problem, some of the great paradoxes of Africa’s persisting development crisis are continuing under-engagement of millions of potentially transformational female talent in managerial roles, and the systematic relegation of their educational and capacity development needs based on misguided traditional values and gender based prejudice” (Ibeh and Debrah, 2011 cited in Wallace and Smith, 2011, pp. 10).

Management as it is known in present times has been established since the late nineteenth century when the hierarchy of authority in organizations began to develop; there was the need for specializations in these organizations (Galambos and Pratt, 1988; cited in Fagenson, 1993). Modern management, as well as specialization in its peculiar form began to exist in Africa.

In Nigeria, glass ceiling has been one of the hindrances to the advancement of women in their careers, the issue of glass ceiling has been a bone of contention since colonial times and the problem has refused to abate (Kiamba, 2008).

The barrier that hinders women from gaining entrances into the labour market or by preventing them from attaining management positions can be described as “ glass ceiling”; it is invisible and difficult to penetrate through thereby preventing individuals from moving upward in their careers (Tlasis and Kauser, 2010)

Nigerian women have had to overcome various aspects of glass ceiling, which usually are in forms of discrimination, which is clearly defined by article 1 of the United Nations convention on the eradication of discrimination against women (CEDAW) as

” any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on the basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in

the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field” (www. unifem.org/cedaw30/about_cedaw/).

The history of women in Nigeria’s public administration shows immense diversity in the civil service. The increased presence and widespread of women in the civil service of Nigeria cannot be ignored. Yet, women in managerial positions are still uncommon within government institution in Nigeria. Although discrimination continues to exist as a limiting factor to women which prevents them from enjoying equal opportunities within the civil service (Robert, 2004)

Adeleke, (2003), continued that the inequality between men and women in Nigeria’s civil service has created gap between them socially, culturally and politically within the society. Adeleke, (2003), argued further that women are being deprived of their rights as compared to men especially when it relates to their careers. Though it is said that men and women have equal opportunities in the civil service, the men are more dominant in the government institution than women. Forms of discrimination arises in situation such as unfair recruitment processes, promotion and remuneration policies.

From the studies of Robert (2004), it is evident through his analysis that men are more represented than women in the Nigeria’s civil service; the data below clearly support these assertion:

Table A: Percentage of men and women in federal civil service.

Year	Percentage of men	Percentage of women
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2001	71.5	28.5
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2002	71.3	28.7
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2003	69.3	30.7
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2004	70.5	29.5
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Source: WACOL, 2008 (cited in Fatile et al., 2011)

Oakley (2000) explains two rationales that are considered for the continuation of glass ceiling, which are socio-cultural issues and those related to organizational barriers. On the socio-cultural, several researches have explained the glass ceiling issues women are faced with at work. The studies explain traditional gender roles as one of the many reasons women face challenges at work. The society ascribes these roles to women, which can be classified as negative stereotypes to women, such as duties attributed to women, which expect them to care for the home and their family alone.

The effect of this on women is that they are not able to maintain a career; they shuttle between flexible working hours and work in poor pay jobs, in comparison with their male counterparts who are perceived to provide for the family and in so doing have access to robust financial incentives and salaries (Anker, 1997, cited in Okafor, et. al., 2011).

Hence, Krotz, (2006), argues that women tend to build their careers towards roles that the society accepts to be suitable for women and not what they desire or challenging jobs that they aspire to attain.

The Nigerian government took a notable action by including specific policies into the Nigerian constitution when they realized that it was challenging for women to gain entry into managerial position particularly in civil service organizations. This action revealed the government is in support of equality within the Nigerian society (Fadeke et al., 2010). The 1999 constitution of the Nigerian government in section 17 (1), states that;

“ the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be based on the principles of freedom, equality and social Justice”, Section 14(3), further states that “ the State is enjoined to direct its policy towards ensuring that all citizens are not discriminated against on any grounds whatsoever, and should have the means of securing adequate means of livelihood as well as adequate opportunities to secure suitable employment, in addition, discrimination on grounds of ethnic group, place of origin, sex and religion or political opinion is highly prohibited”

From the above section of the constitution, by law, it can be deduced that women have equal rights with men in the Nigerian society and equal opportunities at work to attain the heights of their careers; women have a right to equal positions like manager and director as men. The Nigerian government also in 2006 introduced the National gender policy to ensure that these laws are duly obeyed. The aim of the National Gender Policy

includes “ to achieve minimum threshold of representation for women in order to promote equal opportunity in all areas of political, social and economic life of the country for women, as well as men” (NGP: 20, cited in Fadeke et al., 2010). The Federal government before the 1999 constitution did not have laws in place in support of women’s position in the society particularly in their careers to attain managerial positions but this passage of the law has brought about a new lease of life for career women (Taylor and Conradie, 1997, cited in Fadeke et al., 2010).

2. 3. 2 Nigerian Labour Market and Political System

The Nigerian Labour market is another element that shapes the careers of individual in the economy; careers are influenced by the size of the labour market, unemployment in the labour market, changing government and policies within the labour market. Research conducted by world fact book in 2010 shows that Nigeria has the largest labour market in West Africa with more than 47million workers. The economy is still experiencing scarcity of jobs as unemployment rose to 4. 9 percent in 2007, a large percentage of the labour market consist of unskilled workers and can be grouped within the informal sector of the labour market. More specifically, Nigerian labour market consists of more men than women because it is a male dominated economy and to this effect, the gendering of the workplace is still prevalent. Although there are no written policies at the workplace that favours men, organizations are structured in a way that it favours men than women and any woman trying to venture into the workplace especially an occupation

that is dominated by men is faced with a lot of challenges, this happens in reality (Mordi et al., 2010)

Employment Rates in Nigeria, within age group, 2008

Source ILO 2010, cited in Oyenjeli

From the figure above, it can be deduced that there is high level of inequality within Nigeria labour market. Men are more dominant in the labour force between the ages of 45-49 with a percentage of 99. 2% compared to women. Women between ages 50-54 makeup the highest percentage among women (69. 5%) in the labour market

The Nigerian political system also plays a role in the labour market because of changing governments and different labour policies introduced by the government into the labour market. Since independence, Nigeria has had to change power between the military and civilian government regimes, and a significant effect of this is that these policies introduced have not been sustained within the labour market because these policies are changed whenever there is a new government in power (Mordi et al., 2010)

2. 3. 3 Cultural Beliefs and Work-Life Balance

Several studies including that of Obi (2001), Adeleke, (2003) and Omotola (2007), have explored the challenges women are faced with while trying to attain managerial positions in an organization. Some of the challenges include cultural beliefs, unsupportive work environment, national restrictions, educational limitation and difficulty in balancing career and family. There is

also the belief that women in top managerial positions are wayward. As a result of this belief women shy away from top ranking positions (Olojede, 2009).

George, Kuye and Onokala (2012), further argues that the global trend of about 1-5percent of women found in managerial position has also been revealed in Nigeria society; this is as a result of cultural beliefs and work life balance of women. In Nigeria, culturally women both at home and at work are not encouraged to take up positions of authority. George, Kuye and Onokala, (2012), Research in Cadbury Nigeria Plc reveals that male workers in the organization do not accept women managers as their superiors and this is not so for Cadbury Plc (UK), where the men are not particular about who manages them. He also observed that for women in the workplace to be promoted to managerial positions, they are usually harassed and intimidated by their superiors and those women who eventually attain these positions at work are seen to have attained the position on the basis of sex and not of merit. George, Kuye and Onokala, (2012), concluded that as culture remains an important part in the Nigeria society, it will be tough for women to get to management positions, cultural norms will continue to limit women in achieving top management positions eventually leading to more men representing at these positions.

The most important part for Nigerian women's life is the family, according to the society, women are responsible for taking care of the home and balancing both work. The family life creates challenges for women who want to have a successful career; it does not only affect the women but it causes

potential problems for the families and organizations too (Fadeke et al., 2010). Men are more interested in a work role more than women; it is the women that experience more challenges trying to balance both their work life and family life because the society expects women to take care of their household and family (Burke and Collins, 2001).

Women still have to make decisions between their career and family in ways that men do not. Women will have to choose between pursuing a career, getting married, having to raise the children and reaching the top of her career as a manager within the organization. Working with her male counterparts who are not making these choices creates barriers for women aspiring to be managers (Kiamba, 2008). For a woman who is married, her choice of career path may be in contrast to that of her husband. This is because even when she is qualified for a top managerial position, she may relent because she may not have the time needed to devote to her work as her attention is needed fully at home. Some organizations in Nigeria as part of their policies do not transfer or promote married women to certain positions so as not to cause domestic crisis within their families. Women with families would not like a transfer to another country or state in the same organization, longer hours of work will not be desirable to her and these result in hindering her from getting to top management positions (Akanbi and Salami, 2011).

Over the past years, balancing work for women has been an issue of concern as it reinforces the “ glass ceiling” phenomenon making it difficult for women to break through the barriers (Fadeke et al., 2010). Women prefer careers

that give them the opportunity to be able to carry out their responsibilities within the family. As more women gain access into management positions in the public world, balancing both work and family life becomes a real challenge because they have to deal with conflicting demands of their careers, caring for their children and other personal issues such as marriage demands (Marcinkus, Whelean-Berry and Gordon, 2007).

2. 3. 4 Stereotypes

Women who are managers are faced with various challenges and strongly hold negative stereotypes at the work place which differentiates them from their male colleagues. Studies have shown that female managers are described to be less confident and having poorer leadership abilities as compared to men who are also in managerial positions (Owen and Todor, 1993). Some of the assumptions that have been acknowledged as stereotypes that hinder women are that women put their family demands first above their occupational duties. They lose their interest in their duties at work because they have children to take care of; they only work for extra income to be able to support the family. They are also classified as being emotional which makes them lose the necessary will to run an organization because when criticized, they tend to take it more personally than professionally when compared to men; these makes them unsuitable for top managerial positions (Okafor et al., 2011).

Studies conducted by both Broveman et al., (1972) and Heilman et al., (1989) cited in Oakley (2000), conforms the existence of stereotypes on both sexes. Both studies see female managers as basically lacking self-

confidence, below average, non analytical, inconsistent, unstable emotionally and poor leadership abilities in comparison to their male counterparts. Both studies also agree managers frequently associate desirable managerial traits with men and the opposite with women. Male were considered to be aggressive, independent, lacking emotion, objective, active, dominant, logical, self-confident and skilled in business. Women were stereotypically seen as displaying the opposite trait of males on all the competence related traits, which indicates that female traits are linked with incompetence. It therefore does not come as a surprise, the lack of female managers as a result of their perceived stereotypes. Consequently, successful corporate executive managers without regards to gender will most likely by choice defer to the traits associated with male stereotypes.

The next chapter reviews the methodology employed in conducting the research.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3. 1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research method that was employed to uncover the underlying issues that accounted for the underrepresentation of women in managerial position in the Nigeria civil service. According to Bryman and Bell (2011, pp. 39), “ A research method is simply a technique for collecting data, it can involve a specific instrument, such as a self-completion questionnaire or a structured interview schedule, or participant observation whereby the researcher listens to and watches others”. Qualitative research method has its roots in social science; it is concerned about the attitudes, beliefs and

behaviors of people, it seeks to understand why people behave in certain ways (Mays and Pope, 2000). A qualitative methodology was employed using both primary and secondary data's in gathering information and analyzing the study.

3. 2 Research Design

The research design that was administered for the study is an explorative and descriptive approach which was employed within survey research design to observe, explore and describe the social phenomena in the context of this research. The main method of data collection was semi-structured in-depth interview technique. This was used because it is an exploratory study to determine the issues and challenges facing women managers in Nigeria and because it shows a clear picture of respondent position on the subject matter. This was made possible because open ended questions were adopted where respondents were allowed to answer the questions according to how they felt and their thinking. The reason why the face to face interview was employed was because Nigeria is still a developing country and to this effect, other telecommunication methods like emails through computer based study or telephone interviews would not be effective because they are not efficient systems of communication in Nigeria and this can slow down the process of carrying out the study as there was limited time to complete the research. Secondary research that includes journal articles, working papers, books and past reports from the Nigerian civil service was also used.

3.3 Research Philosophy

The nature of this research study is qualitative. Qualitative research is defined as “ a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning” (Shank, 2002, pp. 5, cited in Ospina, 2004), meaning that researchers following basic rules make inquiry through the world of experience, by attempting to interpret social phenomena in terms of the meaning people give to it (Ospina, 2004). Interpretivism is the epistemological foundation for which the researched is based. Epistemological issues “ are concerned with the question of what is or should be regarded as acceptable knowledge in discipline” (Bryman and Bell, 2011, pp. 15). Interpretivism according to Bryman and Bell, (2011, pp. 17) “ is predicated upon the view that a strategy is required that respects the differences between people and the objects of natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action”

Ontological position of this study is constructionism which “ asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors” (Bryman and Bell, 2011, pp. 22). This means that social phenomena are brought about by social processes